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L.A. WEEKLY (ISSN 0192-1940 & USPS 461-370) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE OF $55.00 PER SIX MONTHS & $90.00 PER YEAR BY L.A. WEEKLY, LP; 3861 SEPULVEDA BLVD., CULVER CITY, CA 90230. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CA. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO L.A. WEEKLY, PO. BOX 4315, LOS ANGELES, CA 90078-4315.

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Recent Stroke?
The search committee for a new superintendent of Los Angeles Unified promised to look far and wide for the most qualified candidate to lead the nation's second-largest school district. But in the end, the LAUSD school board decided to hire from within, choosing longtime deputy superintendent Michelle King to oversee more than 1,000 schools.

At a press conference announcing the appointment, board president Steve Zimmer invoked the Beatles, saying, “To quote Lennon and McCartney, we didn’t know the long and winding road would lead us to our own door when we started. And it was the right road, and it was the right door.”

Yet to those who see L.A. Unified as a troubled morass, squeezed by low student achievement on one hand and a dismal financial outlook on the other, King is something of a blank canvas.

Unlike some past LAUSD superintendents who were outspoken about their agendas even before taking the job, King has been vague when it comes to her beliefs — about everything from test scores to technology in the classroom. Insiders who have worked with her, and who would rather not be quoted saying anything negative about her, describe King as an almost sphinxlike figure.

If former superintendent John Deasy was a tempest, King was the calm, silent operator. She was an effective implementer of other people’s ideas. But what about her own ideas?

When King was asked, at the press conference, what her vision for the schools was, she replied with platitudes: “What I want to see happen for the youth in Los Angeles is that we’re able to build on what we’ve started and broaden and expand it. I see us being able to expand opportunities for our youth.” And so on.

“I don’t know Michelle King,” says former state Sen. Gloria Romero, an outspoken advocate for change in the public schools, who now heads the California Center for Parent Empowerment. “The concern I do have is, she’s made her career by basically playing along. We still have real failure in the district. I think it will be same-old, same-old.”

But many parents and teachers are happy that an educator and native Angeleno is leading the school district, after years of iconoclastic nonlocals including Deasy, a New Englander; Ramon Cortines, who came from San Francisco; and David Brewer, a former Navy admiral from Virginia.

“One of the things I was excited about was how much people wanted an educator to be the leader of LAUSD,” says school board member Monica Ratliff, herself a former LAUSD teacher. “They wanted a teacher, a principal. They wanted someone who knew L.A.”

King is the first woman since 1929 to run L.A. Unified, and the first-ever African-American woman. Perhaps even more impressive is her personal story: a graduate of LAUSD, a single mother of three daughters who graduated from LAUSD, an LAUSD teacher for 10 years, a principal for three years.

Ever since she was promoted to assistant superintendent in 2005, King has worked inside the school district’s massive, cubelike headquarters, which sits high atop a hill overlooking the 110 freeway in downtown Los Angeles.

There, King quietly made her way up through the district bureaucracy. She was promoted to local district superintendent in 2008, to superintendent chief of staff in 2010, and to deputy superintendent in 2011, serving under both Cortines and Deasy, both of whom have rather outsized personalities. Monica Garcia, LAUSD’s longest-serving board...
Today, Los Angeles Unified is in the eye of a very large storm.

In 2012, LAUSD was forced to cut $390 million from its budget, as the full weight of the Great Recession finally hit state funding of public education. The school year was shortened by 10 days. Adult education, deeply popular in a city of immigrant adults, was decimated. So was arts education. Thousands of LAUSD employees were laid off.

To address the crisis hitting schools statewide, Gov. Jerry Brown convinced voters in November 2012 to pass a temporary sales tax increase. The next year, Brown radically changed the way the state provides money to local school districts, giving districts with a large number of low-income families and English-language learners a bigger piece of the pie — a huge windfall for LAUSD.

LAUSD’s budget ballooned to $7.8 billion, $1.8 billion more than the dark days of 2012.

But things are about to get a whole lot worse than during the recession. Soon.

First, that temporary statewide sales tax increase that voters approved expires at the end of this year, although proponents of a ballot initiative to make the sales tax hike permanent are gathering signatures. Brown, however, had promised Californians it was a “temporary” tax, a promise widely seen as assurance its passage — and nobody knows if voters are still feeling generous.

But LAUSD’s more profound problem isn’t that of persuading California taxpayers to pay permanent higher taxes. The bigger problem is its customers — the children.

While the city of Los Angeles and its surrounding county continue to grow slowly, the population of children is actually falling. Just as significant is L.A.’s declining birthrate. According to the L.A. County Department of Health, the child population in the county has fallen nearly 17 percent since 2000, when L.A. County population growth outpaced that of the state and the nation.

Los Angeles County is no longer a hotbed of population growth — nor is the city. Today, L.A. County’s growth rate lags both the state and the nation.

And that means that just over the horizon, LAUSD faces a fiscal crisis that could very well make the 2012 budget cuts look like a growing concern — capable of improving the lives of students and their families, then a combination of difficult, substantial and immediate decisions will be required," the panel warned. "Failure to do so could lead to the insolvency of the LAUSD, and the loss of local governance authority that comes from state takeover."

Michael Fine, chief administrative officer for the state’s Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, who served on the panel, says there is still time to fix things. LAUSD is "not in crisis at this point. It can balance its budget for the next few years. But if they ignore everything, crisis is a few years away."

Among the panel’s recommendations: buying out the contracts of longtime teachers, increasing student attendance and cutting health care and pension benefits of district employees.

It’s unclear how much weight those suggestions will be given by the school board — or by King.

When asked about the panel’s recommendations, King seemed noncommittal, even indecisive, despite having seen the report when it came out three months ago.

“I currently have a team of leaders combing through the recommendations for feasibility and etc.,” she tells L.A. Weekly. “I don’t have an answer to that question at this point. Do we need to address declining enrollment? Certainly.”

Ref Rodriguez, one of the most recently elected of the school board members, recalls being surprised at the number of applicants for the superintendent job when word went out that LAUSD was looking. He thought there’d be more.

“I actually thought we were gonna have a deep bench of great candidates,” says Rodriguez, a former charter-school operator known for his success in educating children in working-class areas. “I thought we’d be going through a list of 150 résumés. I knew pretty early on, once we received the first batch of candidates — ‘Oh, this is really shallow water.’"

Perhaps candidates were put off by the somewhat precarious political realities of the superintendent, who serves at the pleasure of the seven-member school board, who themselves are elected by the public.

Since the public’s perception of LAUSD is fairly dismal, board members these days find it relatively difficult to get re-elected. That means the political makeup of the board is always in flux — only three of the seven current board members have served a full term.

And education politics are famously polarized, pitting the teachers union and its allies versus the school board reformers, who are pushing for more charter schools and greater teacher accountability.

A number of education leaders and big-city superintendents declined to be considered for the LAUSD job, including San Francisco superintendent Richard Carranza. Rumor has it that Carranza only wanted it if he got the support of all seven board members.

Unanimity also was important to board president Steve Zimmer, who was at pains to stress the fact that the balkanized school board had come together to unanimously hire King. Indeed, there are indications that the board is, if not entirely on the same page, far less polarized than it has been in recent years.

“We’re willing to listen to one another,” Rodriguez says, “and even open enough to say, ‘I see it differently now.’ I’ll tell you, those words did come out of board members during this selection process.”

King was, by many accounts, a compromise. There were four votes for a few different candidates, but no candidate initially satisfied Zimmer’s wish for board unanimity.

Consensus began to slowly coalesce around King, in part because they all knew and respected her, and in part because of her apparent ideological flexibility, according to those familiar with the search process. She is, after all, an administrator, not a politician or policy wonk. She is above all an implementer, someone who knows who to call to get something fixed, someone who knows how to make change if not necessarily which changes to make.

“There’s no shortage of vision in LAUSD,” says Dr. David Plank, executive director of Policy Analysis for California Education. “In fact, there are two competing visions for what the future of the district looks like.”

As Plank explains, “The board avoided setting up a contest between those two visions. What the appointment of King suggests is that for a time, at least, she has some space to address the bureaucratic problems, the system problems, and leave the arguments about vision to the board.”

School board member Ratliff resists that analysis, saying, “Whoever the superintendent was going to be, we were going to have a strong role in getting the policy and vision. You know this board likes to set the agenda.”

“I am a collaborator,” King explains. “And I see the school board and myself working in a partnership. We’re really developing and working together on a common, shared vision. In no way do I see that they’re handing down something and I execute. Quite the opposite.”

It’s all smiles for Superintendent Michelle King, but LAUSD’s customers — its children — are leaving for charter schools.
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Scott Schmerelson, elected to the school board last year, had one question for every superintendent candidate: “Have you ever been a member in the Broad Academy?”

That’s billionaire Eli Broad’s superintendent academy, from which John Deasy both graduated and where he now works. It’s a supposedly non-ideological center that trains educators in many of the fundamentals of how to manage school districts.

“That was my first question,” says Schmerelson, a former teacher who opposes the pro-charter school ethos embraced by Broad. If the answer to his question was ‘yes,’ he says, “They were eliminated, in my mind, as a candidate for the district. “Maybe I’m not being a logical fellow,” he adds. “But in my way of thinking, they have a certain mentality. Students are considered market shares rather than students. I can’t risk it. ‘Cause I don’t trust them. I’m being very honest with you.”

Broad has long been a financial backer of charter schools and school-reform candidates, and his foundation is one of the main financial backers of an effort to expand the number of charter schools in Los Angeles. That plan, leaked to the Los Angeles Times in August, is considered by Schmerelson and Zimmer to be a declaration of war against L.A. Unified.

The newly created nonprofit behind the charter-expansion plan, Great Public Schools Now, has been scrambling to soften its image and scale back its agenda. The nonprofit’s leaders now say that, in addition to funding new charter schools, they’ll work with the school board to open magnet schools and pilot schools.

But that didn’t stop the school board from voting, on King’s first day on the job as superintendent, to oppose the Great Public Schools Now plan — a largely symbolic vote, to be sure, but a signal of intent.

“It’s certainly, for the school board, a convenient rallying cry to suggest what they want to do is come up with their own solutions,” says Great Public School Now’s new executive director, Myrna Castrejón.

Since the school board can’t do anything about Los Angeles’ declining birth rate, it has decided that its survival hinges on competing against the charter schools. That would entail, in part, giving L.A. schools greater autonomy.

But for some board members, it also means trying to stop the spread of charter schools.

All new charter schools must be approved by the school board. According to the California Charter School Association, in fiscal year 2013-14, the LAUSD School Board rejected just two of 19 new charter school applications.

The next year, the school board rejected three out of 14 efforts to form charter schools. But during the current fiscal year, the school board has rejected six out of 14 new charters, more than in the previous two years combined — and the fiscal year is only half over.

“We are losing students to charters,” Schmerelson says. “And in order to maintain dates, and his foundation is one of the main financial backers of an effort to expand the number of charter schools in Los Angeles. That plan, leaked to the Los Angeles Times in August, is considered by Schmerelson and Zimmer to be a declaration of war against L.A. Unified.

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But if the seven-member school board has a plan for winning back Los Angeles-area parents who are increasingly switching their children to charter schools, it’s keeping that plan very close to the vest.

“Either we keep doing what we’re doing, which is blaming charter schools as the reason for declining enrollment, or we really roll up our sleeves and figure it out,” Rodriguez conceded.

Which is why some are wondering if maybe the board should have chosen more of a visionary than Michelle King.

“The exodus to charter schools is the biggest indicator that parents have lost faith in the district,” says Nicholas Melvoin, a former LAUSD teacher, who’s now a lawyer and school reform advocate. For the school board to value unanimity in making decisions, he says, “doesn’t mean anything. I’d rather have 4-to-3 board votes — and know that the district is innovating.”

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Some restaurants take a while to mature. For Girasol and Union, the wait was worth it.

BY BESHA RODELL

It is there anything more frustrating for a critic than to write about a restaurant that’s bursting with as-yet-unrealized potential? For this critic, there is not. Let’s put aside, for a minute, the old and tired debate about when it’s fair to judge a new restaurant (I wait at least six weeks, usually way longer) and look instead at when a restaurant truly becomes what it’s going to be for the long haul. This varies, of course. In recent years I’ve encountered many places that benefit from the energy and perfectionism of an opening team, only to slip into mediocrity a few months later. And I’ve encountered just as many that start out with shaky service and not-quite-there cooking but manage to set themselves right over the course of a few months or years. These are restaurants that, like some people, take a little more time to bloom, those for which awkward adolescence lasts longer. Usually I can taste the potential of eventual maturity, and I can see what’s holding the chef or staff back.

But it would be unfair to readers (and unhelpful to owners) to write about what something is going to be rather than what it is right now. This week I circle back to two such places, restaurants that had huge potential in their early days but, at the time of my review, still hadn’t quite grown into what they ultimately would become: Girasol in Studio City and Union in Pasadena.

Girasol’s chef and owner C.J. Jacobsen was at the forefront of a restaurant renaissance in the San Fernando Valley when he opened there in the summer of 2013. Back then, the chef’s ambition was obvious. Between appearances on two separate seasons of Top Chef, Jacobsen had spent time at Noma in Copenhagen, and the modernist, naturalist influence of that experience was obvious. Things were being forged. Ingredients arrived scattered across the plate in artful disarray.

But while the flavors were often interesting and inventive, the cooking itself was lacking. I sensed that Jacobsen might be having trouble finding kitchen staff to match his aspirations. The ideas were all there, but the execution of those ideas was often clumsy.

So I was surprised and thrilled during a couple of recent visits to find food that was not only far from clumsy — it was some of the more elegant and meticulous cooking I’ve experienced lately. Jacobsen has managed to create a menu with a broad appeal while still injecting a high level of creativity.

If kelly green had a flavor, it would probably taste like the wild sorrel broth that comes pooled around Jacobsen’s hamachi crudo, vibrant in both color and taste and shot through with white fish and finger lime for a citrusy, woody, grassy combination. The buttery fish comes with sea beans, and the dish as a whole makes you think of the ocean and the forest and the orchard all at once.

Jacobsen has an affection for interesting ingredients manipulated in interesting ways, such as toasted lox, which he uses to flavor the butter that comes with the hearty, springy, house-baked bread and also on a beautiful octopus salad with roasted eggplant and rosemary-ash oil. The lovage reminded me immediately of a bloody Mary, its subtle whisper of celery hitting on a specific sense memory. That ability to conjure nature and transport you, to make you really think about what’s on the plate, is rare.

Entrees tend to be a little less adventurous than the forward-thinking appetizers, though no less well-prepared, and touches such as grilled lettuce and long-roasted eggplant in downtown Pasadena from chef Bruce Kalman had some service issues, and I set through one special-occasion meal there (Mother’s Day) that was expensive and felt anything but special.

If Union in Pasadena suffered from anything when I first reviewed it in mid-2014, it was less tangible a problem than the cooking slippups at Girasol. The small storefront Cali-Italian restaurant downtown Pasadena from chef Bruce Kalman had some service issues, and I sat through a couple of recent visits to find food that was basically a bowl of odiously sweet, creamy gloop. But at least it wasn’t boring.

If Union in Pasadena suffered from anything when I first reviewed it in mid-2014, it was less tangible a problem than the cooking slippups at Girasol. The small storefront Cali-Italian restaurant downtown Pasadena from chef Bruce Kalman had some service issues, and I set through one special-occasion meal there (Mother’s Day) that was expensive and felt anything but special.

Yet I wondered if I’d just had a string of bad luck at Union, a thing that can happen even over several meals at a good restaurant. OK, maybe that much bad luck shouldn’t happen — and I stand by my original review — but almost everyone I know loved the place from day one.

After revisiting Union a few times in the past few months, I finally get it. The service has improved significantly, and there’s always an affable manager type circling the small, bustling room keeping an eye on things. Everything about Union feels welcoming — the warm buzzing space, the perfectly calibrated food. Large family groups commune at long tables, the babies among them happily gobbling meatballs as their parents drink interesting Italian reds.

It’s the type of place where people stop in for a quick plate of pasta and a glass of wine at the bar, a perfect first-date spot, a perfect 100th-date spot.

Starters, such as a beautifully spiced cotechino sausage served with braised collard greens and a soft poached egg, are inventive but comforting above all else.

The handmade pastas are the star of the show, however, from the simplest tomato sauce-dressed spaghetti alla chitarra to heavier rags. A dish labeled lasagnette — basically strips of the ruffly edges of lasagna noodles, served as a jumble with golden chanterelles and deeply musky is about as warming and rich and deeply musky as anything you might hope for from your friendly neighborhood gem.

Union is a better restaurant than you’d expect on first glance, and it looks pretty good to begin with.

In my original review, I said that Union was the perfect Tuesday night restaurant. These days, I’d be more inclined to say you should go whenever you get the chance.

GIRASOL | 3 stars | 1334 Moorepark St., Studio City (818) 924-2323 | girasolrestaurant.com | Daily, 5-11 p.m.; brunch: Sat., 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Entrees: $16-$36 | Valet parking

UNION | 3 stars | 37 E. Union St., Pasadena (626) 795-5841 | unionpasadena.com | Mon.-Fri., 5-11 p.m.; Sat., 4-11 p.m.; Sun., 4-10 p.m. Entrees: $14-$36 | Street parking, paid lot across the street
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ROY CHOI REINVENTS FAST Food IN WATTS

The line along East 103rd Street stretched down the block. Mayor Eric Garcetti, director Jon Favreau and actress Lena Dunham were in attendance. Old-school R&B and hip-hop pumped out of loudspeakers. Unless you were familiar with the backstory of LocoL — the ambitious project from chefs Roy Choi and Daniel Patterson, which aims to send shockwaves through America’s fast-food ecosystem — it would be hard to imagine all this energy stemmed from a single restaurant opening in Watts. Yet it was in this overlooked, underserved South Central L.A. neighborhood that Choi and Patterson saw the biggest potential for change.

The menu at LocoL fulfills the promise Choi made to 2015 Indiegogo backers in a campaign that raised more than $125,000 and, before that, a talk that Patterson (chef of San Francisco’s Coi) gave at the 2014 MAD Symposium, in which he aspired to help impoverished communities by offering healthful, affordable food. At LocoL there are $4 cheeseburgers, $3 chicken nuggets, $6 bowls of chili, $1 cups of braised greens or beef-onion gravy and $2 handheld quesadillas called “foldies.”

If you’re familiar with the cooking of these chefs, it’s easy to spot the tweaks and tricks that allow LocoL’s food to boast the flavor of chef-driven establishments while being cheap enough to compete with fast-food chains. The fried chicken patty is moist and juicy, formed from minced bits of chicken and cut with a small amount of grain, then crowned with a wonderfully acidic slaw. The umami-rich burger patty was engineered with similar ingenuity.

The colorful sauces, familiar to anyone who’s eaten at Kogi or Chego, are deeply flavorful. The burger buns, designed by Tartine baker Chad Robertson, have the subtle yeasty tang of properly risen bread.

The food is interesting and compelling enough to warrant its own story, but what most commands your attention at LocoL are the people: Fifty or so local residents, nearly all African-American, make up the staff. Community members gather in the free-form dining room, and passersby peer through large screen windows to see what’s happening inside. It seems acutely designed to draw you in from the street.

As the grand excitement of its Martin Luther King Jr. Day opening fades into a normal business routine, it will be intriguing to see if LocoL can effect the change it seeks in Watts, as well as in planned locations like San Francisco’s Tenderloin and Oakland. If there’s one thing that makes the future of fast food seem palatable, it’s a $4 cheeseburger that leaves you feeling good long after you eat it.

—Garrett Snyder

LocoL, 1950 E. 103rd St., Watts; welocol.com.

NEW RESTAURANTS

GEORGEOUS, AMBITIOUS RECESS NOW OPEN IN HIGHLAND PARK

If you’ve walked down the main strip of York Boulevard in the last couple of years, maybe on your way to grab a beer at Hermosillo or buy a trellis at Do It Best Hardware, you’ve probably walked past Recess. You would be forgiven, however, for not realizing it — Recess has been hidden from view, its façade blocked off by a wall of black wood between the York and Arroyo General.

But those walls are down and Recess is now open to the public, revealing the fruit of 2½ years of labor by wife-and-husband owners Tamar Kevonian and Sevan Abdessian (who is also the chef) and their team, who have brought to Highland Park an expansion of their popular Glendale restaurant of the same name.

Gorgeous, Ambitious Recess Now Open in Highland Park

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Los Angeles Times September, 2009

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brown color scheme and exposed brick and beams. There are patios in front and out back; the latter has a giant fireplace and two olive trees, perfect for brunch.

The menu is mostly modern American, influenced by Abdessian’s Armenian and Mediterranean roots. The flatbread comes topped with souyouk; the seared ahi salad is dotted with Sriracha labneh aioli, and you can add falafel to any of the salads.

Otherwise, dishes are classic with some twists, such as New York steak crusted with Aleppo pepper, confit tomatoes in the Caprese salad or edamame tossed with the traditional Armenian salad fatoush. Pastas are made in-house, and the cheese board comes with a chunk of honeycomb.

With many entrees around $20, it’s a bit of a jump for a neighborhood that has only recently grown used to $7 pints. But if the prices at the nearby home-goods stores and art galleries are any indication, the area may well be ready for an alternative to the quietly great Ba.

Kevonian and Abdessian have made a point of keeping Recess family-friendly. They say they’d love to see strollers and kids there anytime, and there are changing tables in bathrooms, power outlets at every table and a kids section on the menu.

But going out without kids is fun, too. There are a handful of seats at the bar and the cocktail list is interesting and fun. In other words, Recess wants to be a bit of everything for everyone, a truly ambitious project in this hip and still changing neighborhood.

—Ben Meisrow

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Factory Kitchen Team Expands Into Arts District’s Officine Brera

The Arts District has become the unlikely ground zero for large, ambitious Italian restaurants. That trend continues at Officine Brera, which begins serving on Feb. 5 adjacent to its sister restaurant, the Factory Kitchen (another large, ambitious Italian restaurant). But for owner Matteo Ferdinandi and chef Angelo Auriana, this project was their original vision.

Ferdinandi tells of meeting with building owner/partner Howard Klein. “When I met with Howard, Angelo and I were ready to make a presentation about the Officine Brera concept, which we had been working on since 2012,” Ferdinandi says. “Howard said, ‘Look, I have the building, but you won’t have it until 2014. What about this other space next door?’ We went to see it and we understood that we could not do Brera in that space.” The kitchen was too small for what they had in mind. “But we took it and created Factory Kitchen.”

Now their original vision is coming to life. So what makes the restaurants different? Where Factory Kitchen is focused mainly on pasta and the foods of regions such as Sicily and Tuscany, Officine Brera will look to the north of Italy for its inspiration, and will focus on fire-cooked meats. “The menu is inspired by the countryside of northern Italy,” chef Auriana says, “places we went in our childhood where restaurants produced everything in-house. The difference will be the depth of flavor we can achieve. Factory has a very small kitchen.”

At Officine Brera, the large glassed-in kitchen is central to the feel of the restaurant. “You can see everything,” Auriana says. “The first impact will be a line of fire: a wood-burning oven, a rotisserie, two grills… that’s the soul of our concept. Not inventing anything, just going back to the roots of how it was done.”

Auriana says there will be a focus on risotto, and he’ll be paying attention to the regional specificity of rice varietals. “Each rice is different,” he says. “Different rices work better for different risottos.”

When asked if they’ll be bringing anything that diners haven’t seen before, Auriana says, “You’ve probably seen it before, but maybe the dumbed-down version. People say, ‘Americans love garlic, let’s put more garlic in it.’”

Auriana says his Officine means “workshop” and “Brera” is the arts district in Milan. So the name is an homage to the arts districts both in Italy and in L.A. “They both started with bohemians and artists. They do have a lot in common,” he says. Is he worried about opening a restaurant next door to his other business, in effect competing with himself? “If it wasn’t me, it would be someone else.” —Besha Rodell

Officine Brera, 1331 E. Sixth St., downtown; (818) 507-0592, officinebrera.com.

ITALIAN FOOD
**MUSIC**

**Cuba Libre**

Elies Ochoa and Barbarito Torres, a duo of great players from Cuba’s famed Buena Vista Social Club, show off their skills across a vast range of Cuban music styles, including son, montuno, danzón, cha cha cha, bolero and gleefully scorching Cuban jazz. Vocalist-guitarist Ochoa is a master of the three-stringed tres, the main instrument in son, an African-based musical style from Santiago de Cuba; he also plays a mean cuatro, which has two additional strings. Torres flat-out rips on the laúd, a traditional Cuban instrument of the lute family, which is associated with the guajiro genre (aka Cuban country music). 

**Torres Flat-OUT RIPS ON THE LAÚD, A TRADITIONAL CUBAN INSTRUMENT OF THE LUTE FAMILY, WHICH IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GUAJIRO GENRE (AKA CUBAN COUNTRY MUSIC).**

Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale; Fri., Jan. 29, 9 p.m.; $39.50. riotla.com. —John Payne

**COMEDY**

**A Laugh Riot**

KCRW’s Riot L.A. aims to make downtown ground zero for alternative comedy. Back for its fourth year, the festival spreads stand-up, podcasts, storytelling, roasts — even magic and live animation — across three days and eight venues, including the Downtown Independent, the Regent, the Smell and the Theater at Ace Hotel. The lineup features Patton Oswalt, David Cross, Ron Funches, Gilbert Gottfried, Janeane Garofalo, Maria Bamford, Natasha Leggero, Bridget Everett, Paul F. Tompkins, Anthony Jeselnik, Aisling Bea, T.J. Miller, Thomas Middleditch, Kumail Nanjiani, Baron Vaughn, the Grawlix and the dog-friendly show 2 Girls 1 Pup. Highlights include KCRW’s UnFictional Live, a Comics to Watch stage and a talk with the Katydids, co-creators of TV Land series Teachers. Various locations, downtown; Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30-11:30 p.m.; Sat., Jan. 30, 1 p.m.-mid; Sun., Jan. 31, 10 a.m.-$10-$39.50. riotla.com. —Siran Babayan

**MULTIMEDIA**

**Robot Love**

**Nufonia Must Fall** was turntablist Kid Koala’s 2003 dialogue-free graphic novel that told the story of a headphones-wearing robot that falls in love with an office girl. The Montreal DJ brings his vision to life with help from a dozen artists and technicians, led by Oscar-nominated production designer K.K. Barrett (Being John Malkovich, Adaptation, Lost in Translation, I Heart Huckabees). Puppets are projected on a screen as they re-create each scene from the book on miniature sets. Kid Koala performs a live score with the Afiara Quartet. 

**Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, Westwood; Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m.; $19-$49. (310) 825-2101, cap.ucla.edu.** —Siran Babayan

**DANCE**

**Star Power**

A new dance series featuring performances by a trio of L.A.-based companies, helmed by names known as much for film as for dance, opens with L.A. Dance Project. Benjamin Millepied (Black Swan) founded LADP several years back before heading to France, where he now presides over Paris Opera Ballet. Millepied’s name still brands LADP, and his choreography for Hearts & Arrows joins Harbor Me from Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and New York choreographer-of-the-moment Justin Peck’s highly praised Murder Ballades. Up next week, Debbie Allen (Fame) with Freeze Frame, which promises a high-energy conversation about violence in America. April brings Daniel Ezralow (Across the Universe) and his Ezralow Dance. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri.-Sat., Jan. 29-30, 8 p.m.; $25-$117. (310) 746-4000, thewallis.org. —Ann Haskins

**FESTIVALS**

**The Neon Lights Are Bright**

Eight years ago, city councilman José Huizar introduced Bringing Back Broadway, his 10-year plan to revitalize the historic downtown theater district. He can declare mission accomplished, at least for an evening, as Night on Broadway descends on the corridor for a second year after its inaugural celebration attracted three times more guests than were projected. Broadway will be closed to traffic from Third to Seventh streets for outdoor activities, and seven of the street’s historic theaters open their doors for a variety of performances by local arts and culture organizations, including Reggie Watts at the Tower Theater; a program of short films at the Los Angeles Theater; and here to Vegas to Sheboygan and beyond. Besides which, he’s been a staple side-splitter on TV shows and movies “too numerous to mention,” as they say. They also say that all ethnicities, religions, hairdos and golf scores are fair game for a surreally scabrous skewering by the magnificent Mr. Rickles. Saban Theatre, 8440 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Sat., Jan. 30, 9 p.m.; $79-$150. (888) 645-5006, sabantheatre.org. —John Payne
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Ship Cats: See Thursday.

**FILM**

It’s a Maze-ing

With tributes to David Bowie still pouring in, Cinefamily celebrates the late performer’s other major contribution to pop culture: his films. As part of “Cracked Actor: Bowie on Film,” which includes The Man Who Fell to Earth and The Hunger, the theater screens Labyrinth, Jim Henson’s 1986 puppet fantasy. The movie has become a cult classic and Halloween costume favorite, thanks to Bowie’s wig and the bulge in his pants. Follow a young Jennifer Connelly as she tries to save her baby brother from Jareth the Goblin King (Bowie), who juggles crystal balls and rules over a maze of talking-singing-and-dancing monsters, goblins, dogs, worms and door knobs. It’s Bowie’s world, we just live in it. Cinefamily, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Sun., Jan. 31, 11:15 p.m.; $12. (323) 655-2510, cinefamily.org. —Siran Babayan

**PERFORMANCE**

Queen of Cartoons

New Yorker cartoonist Roz Chast is like that beautiful golden record that was included on the Voyager spaceships — timeless, resonant and full of art that can be equally beautiful and painful. In her one-woman show, Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?, she continues in that vein, revealing a compilation of cartoons, family photos and documents that unveil her parents’ not-so-golden years and what it meant to Chast to lose them both. Much like those Voyagers, plodding along in the far reaches of space, Chast forges ahead with nerve and determination, depths of darkness be damned. Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, UCLA, Westwood; Sun., Jan. 31, 4 p.m.; $19-$49. (310) 825-2101, cap.ucla.edu. —David Cotner

**FOOD**

**Tortilla Time**

The L.A. Taco Takedown is part of a national tour that pits home cooks against one another in a populist showdown. Actor-filmmaker Matt Timms will play host and emcee. Attendees can compete with their best taco filling, or buy a ticket for all-you-can-eat tacos and a ballet to vote. Winners will receive cookware from Cuisinart, Wusthof, Anolon and more. Email matt@thetakedowns.com to enter as a chef-testant. El Cid, 4212 W. Sunset Blvd., Silver Lake; Sun., Jan. 31, 1-3 p.m.; $20 (free to compete). (323) 668-0318, thetakedowns.com/los-angeles-taco-takedown. —Garrett Snyder

**S & M**

Whip It Good

Lux Alani has cracked the whip so you don’t have to. The former dominatrix — she’s also been a crisis counselor, model and Roller Derby girl — discusses The Little Vanilla Book: S&M Wisdom to Improve Your Everyday Life, her new BDSM-inspired self-help guide for “vanilla Janes” who are kink-curious and want to take charge of their lives but don’t plan to ever go near a dungeon. (Dungeons, in case you didn’t know, “are largely matriarchal societies.”) Alani’s how-to is less about sex and fetish and more about applying the principles she’s learned as a dominatrix to such areas as women’s body image, confidence, courage and resilience. If you’re really vanilla, her book also features a glossary of terms, including collar, bullwhip, bottom and top. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Mon., Feb. 1, 7 p.m.; free, book is $15.99. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com. —Gwynedd Stuart

**FORUMS**

It’s Electric

A convocation of conservationists, Greening the Gas Tank brings together tireless Consumer Watchdog president Jamie Court, perennially upbeat environmentalist Ed Begley Jr. and veteran automotive journalist Paul Eisenstein to turn us all on to new ways to get even more nonpolluting vehicles out on the roads. Although the hurdles range from the economic to the political to the technological, they’ll explain solutions that are more graceful than the continued zero-sum reliance on crude oil. It’s all moderated by KPFP voice of reason Ian Masters, no slouch himself when it comes to fighting against entrenched absurdity. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Tue., Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; free. (310) 443-7000, hammer.ucla.edu/programs/events/2016/02/greening-the-gas-tank. —David Cotner
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- A woman of childbearing potential

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COMEDY

Me and Utah
L.A. Phil’s City of Light features conductor David Robertson leading the St. Louis Symphony in Messiaen’s Des canyons aux étoiles... The massive work — 12 movements, 92 minutes — is a jaw-dropping thing to behold. It was inspired by the French composer’s experience of the natural beauty of Utah’s national parks, in particular the towering glories of Bryce Canyon. “Having left the canyons to climb to the stars,” Messiaen said of the piece, “I had only to keep going in the same direction to raise myself up to God.” This multimedia production includes big-screen cinematography and time-lapse photography, plus custom-crafted sets and lighting design. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Tue., Feb. 2, 8 p.m.; $26.50-$65. (323) 850-2000, laphil.com. ~John Payne

Love Is in the Air
L.A. comedian Melinda Hill likes to talk about her lousy love life. Based on her stand-up, Hill’s 2013 online series, Romantic Encounters, poked fun at her string of cringe-worthy dates with unsuitable suitors — think three nipples — and featured fellow comedians Dana Gould, T.J. Miller (Silicon Valley), Carlos Alazraqui (Reno 911) and the late Taylor Negron. Since then, Hill has begun hosting UC Berkeley’s monthly storytelling show Best of Romantic Encounters. (She also co-created, with Maria Bamford, the long-running What’s Up, Tiger Lily?) Apparently Hill is still looking for her soul mate, so she’s performing a staged reading of a new webisode with help from Alazraqui, Drew Broeger, Kent Osborne and others. It’s OK to laugh at her pain. Comedy Central Stage at the Hudson Theatres, 6559 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Wed., Feb. 3, 8 p.m.; free. (323) 850-2499, facebook.com/Comedy-Central-Stage-114055165892812/. ~Siran Babayan

CATS

Cat Fish
Cats aren’t known for loving water (unless it’s dripping very slowly from a bathtub faucet), but it turns out our feline friends can really hold their own at sea. Author and self-made expert in cat history Paul Koudounaris presents Ship Cats: Adventure, Courage, Betrayal!, a lecture and slideshow featuring stories of some of history’s most intrepid cat sailors, including an L.A. cat that won four battle stars. Learn something while looking at photos of cats in sailor hats — which, let’s face it, is probably what you’d be doing anyway. The Last Bookstore, 455 S. Spring St., downtown; Thu., Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.; free. (213) 568-0599, lastbookstorela.com. ~Gwynedd Stuart

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A WHO’S WHO OF WHO TO SEE AT RIOT L.A.
David Cross, Maria Bamford, Natasha Leggero and seven other comedy luminaries shout-out the best stand-ups to see at the weekend DTLA comedy fest

BY JULIE SEABAUGH

The fourth annual Riot L.A. comedy festival returns Friday through Sunday at a half-dozen downtown venues including the Regent, the Downtown Independent and the Theater at Ace Hotel, a new addition to the roster of spaces. Also new this year: dog-friendly show 2 Girls 1 Pup (one of L.A. Weekly’s 10 Best New Stand-Up Shows) is partnering with No-Kill LA. and Best Friends Animal Society for mobile adoptions; Fusion network’s F-Comedy division is sponsoring a Saturday afterparty; and free app Everfest will provide festivalgoers with updated schedules, locations, reminders and even a few giveaways.

There’s almost too much to do and see over the course of a mere 72 hours, so we asked some of the biggest names appearing at this year’s fest, plus festival founder Abbey Londer, to recommend acts that shouldn’t be missed, from up-and-comers to their friends and personal favorites. Tickets for all shows (except those that are sold out) are available at riotla.com.

Maria Bamford (Fri., Jan. 29, 10:30 p.m.): “Jackie Kashian is one of my best friends, and she is also one of my favorite comedians of all time. Her Dork Forest Radio podcast has inspired me to celebrate my own Comic-Con of self-help. I have been playing a long LARP of emotional Sudoku with breaks for Chex Mix. For over 40 years. Oprah is my George Lucas.” Five Star Bar, 267 S. Main St., downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 3 p.m.; $10.

Natasha Leggero (Fri., Jan. 29, 10:30 p.m.): “I would say Moshe Kasher, but he is my husband, so that would be cheating. So I’ll say — Brent Weinbach. Brent is one of the most unique, absurdist comedians of our time. It’s like if Maria Bamford were a half-Filipino, half-Jewish hip-hop-obessed man-boy who listened exclusively to 8-bit Nintendo music and it informed his comedy. Weird. Offbeat. Hilarious. You’ve never seen anything like it.” The Lot, 247 S. Main St.; Sun., Jan. 31, 7 p.m.; $10.

Brian Moses (Roast Battle, Sat. Jan. 30, 11 p.m.): “Redheads are en vogue as of late, but Andrew Santino seems to always be in style. ‘Santino’ — as he’s affectionately called in the streets — is probably your favorite unknown comedian’s favorite unknown comedian. Part party frat guy, part Real N***r, his unique voice brings people of all generations to relate to his perspective of today’s issues. Dude is remarkable.” The Lexington, 129 E. Third St., downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 10:30 p.m.; $10. Also at the New Jalisco, 245 S. Main St., downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 6 p.m.; $10.

Dana Gould (Sun., Jan. 31, 3 p.m.): “Watching Kate Berlant perform is like watching grass push up through the sidewalk. Los Angeles has such an incredibly strong comedy scene, but Kate is a rare jewel. To me, Kate transcends the definition of what a comedian is or is supposed to be, and has created something wholly unique. Kate doesn’t have an ‘act.’ She is her act. She is not a comedian; she is a special effect. And, as is with all special effects, seeing is believing.” The Smell, 247 S. Main St, downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 9:30 p.m.; $15.

Ron Funches (Sun., Jan. 31, 9 p.m.): “Kate Berlant is a force of nature and a pleasure to watch. A gifted and hardworking performer who makes you question your own skills as a comedian and human.” See above.

Paul F. Tompkins (Sat., Jan. 30, 9 p.m.): “Kate Berlant is delightful and always surprising. Guy Branum is pointed and insightful. Both are hilarious. Go see them! You must see them. If they are not pet-grooming opposite my show, that is if they are performing when I am, do not see them. Find them someplace else some other time. This is not open for discussion.” Downtown Independent, 251 S. Main St, downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 5 & 11 p.m.; $15. Also at the Lot, 274 S. Main St., downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 9 p.m.; $10.

Abbey Londer, Riot L.A. founder and executive producer: “I’m excited about A Watch and Talk with The Katydids. Their new show Teachers recently premiered on TV Land. They’ll be showing some unaired, never-before-seen clips from their new show that had Alison Brie, Ian Roberts and others working with them. I grew up with these gals in Chicago and think they’re super talented.” Downtown Independent, 251 S. Main St, downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 11 p.m.; $10.

Baron Vaughn (Sat., Jan. 30, 5 p.m.): “Kristin Rand is a force of nature. Like a boxer in her prime, she hits you in unpredictable ways. Phil Hanley is relaxed and in control, made possible by being one of the best joke writers I’ve ever seen. Caitlin Gill is the smartest person I’ve ever seen explore their own stupidity. If your little sister was funnier than you — and really absurd — she would be Lisa Best. Josh Johnson’s world is full of chaos, and he’s equipped to make you laugh at it. Danny Jolles is one hell of a joke writer. A true comedian. Sammy Arechar: Hilarious. Original. Clever. Silly. All in a huggable package. Ever Mainard has an organic and effortless style that makes you giggle and feel you’ve somehow known her for years. Marcela Arguello is a natural. Something about her is forced. She’s very dry and truly charming.” Gill and Best: New Jalisco, 245 S. Main St, downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m.; $10. Johnson, Best, Jolles: the Lexington, 129 E. Third St., downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 8:30 p.m.; $10. Arechar, Mainard, Gill: the Lexington, 129 E. Third St., downtown; Sat., Jan. 30, 10:30 p.m.; $10. Arguello: New Jalisco, 245 S. Main St, downtown; Sat. Jan. 30, 10 p.m.; $10.

Sam Varela (Sun., Jan. 31, 5 p.m.): “Joel Kim Booster is comedy’s next New York powerhouse. Not only is he a beautiful young man to look at with great hair, his biting wit and ability to deliver comedy truths that rip the current status quo apart have secured his spot in the next generation of comedy greats.” Five Star Bar, 267 S. Main, downtown; Sat, Jan. 30, 7 p.m.; $15. Also at the Lexington, 129 E. Third St, downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 6:30 p.m.; $10.

Londer: “Jermaine Fowler’s show will open with a trumpet player and has an insane lineup: Nicole Byer, Dan St. Germain, Lil’ Rel Howery, Hugh More and James Adomian.” Five Star Bar, 257 S. Main St, downtown; Sun., Jan. 31, 9 p.m.; $15.

RIOT L.A. | Various downtown venues | Fri-Sun., Jan. 29-31 | riotla.com
THEOSOPHY

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Study Class, 6:15 to 7:20 PM in Wednesday Thinkers - Basic Theosophy
Study Class, 7:30 to 8:45 PM in The Secret Doctrine by H.P. Blavatsky
Spanish Study Class, 7:30 to 9:00 PM in La Doctrina Secreta by H.P. Blavatsky

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Remembering Sandra Bland
AND A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH AN ARTIST’S BOXES

BY CATHERINE WAGLEY

This week, an artist creates a maze of small boxes in a Boyle Heights basement, and writers pay homage to Sandra Bland, whose death still presents more questions than answers.

Science as fashion
“The Small Laboratory,” William Leavitt’s installation at Honor Fraser, conjures a mad scientist with good taste. Domestic objects — shelves, a television set, house plants — are strung together by electrical cords and clear-plastic tubing and lit from the sides by the kind of can lights used on stage and film sets. Leavitt, who has been working in L.A. since the late 1960s, wrote a play to accompany the installation, which involves three scientists limited by their own competitiveness and aspirations. The play won’t be performed during this exhibition, but the objects have a minimal tastefulness that’s irrational for a laboratory. You sense an overactive obsession with what other people think. 2622 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City; through Feb. 20. (310) 837-0191, honorfraser.com.

Black cats, fierce breasts
The best two things about Allison Schulnik’s show at Mark Moore Gallery are nipples and cats. Schulnik’s painted and ceramic figures — all female, loosely rendered and wild-looking (some are half-woman, half-horse centaurettes) — tend to have the most remarkable, pink, tubelike nipples at the ends of their breasts. They’re like weapons, guns that could go off. And then there are the cats, vulnerable and silly while the women are fierce. Writhing Boochie is a black ceramic cat lying on its back on a pink pedestal, looking like a diva who’s sick of being pretty. 5790 Washington Blvd., Culver City; through Feb. 20. (310) 453-0391, markmooregallery.com.

Let’s try to get along
Handwritten signs taped up on the way down to 356 Mission’s basement gallery instruct visitors not to touch the artwork and inform them that “guided tours” are available. You might not know why you’d want a tour until you see that artist Susan Cianciolo’s “kits” are lined up in closed cardboard boxes. Only a tour guide can open them and show the arrangements inside. New York–based Cianciolo has a fashion label, Run, which she’s crafted with the help of a sewing circle. Some of the kits, with titles like “Let’s try to get along,” include full outfits. A few are tiny domestic situations handmade by the artist’s daughter. Not all are equally compelling, but the intimacy of choosing which box, opening it with a guide and rummaging through it has enough charm in itself. 356 S. Mission Road, downtown; through March 13. (323) 609-3162, 356mission.com.

Playing God the gritty way
Thought Field, Brooklyn artist Marianne Vitale’s centerpiece sculpture at Venus Over Los Angeles, consists of 90 railroad ties. Each rusty, indestructible object is 40 feet long; together, they weigh about 60 tons. Getting them into the gallery required industrial equipment and workers who know the railroad business — all the ties had to pass through a door significantly narrower than they are, and on a rainy day, too. But when you see the ties, austere on the floor, it’s hard to imagine the muddy, wet, tight maneuvers. They just look as if they arrived there, to sit still, surrounded by white walls. The work in the next room is, perhaps, more deceptive. It consists of six stacks of 11-foot white pine rectangles, which look as if they’ve come straight from a lumberyard, though only after enduring harsh wear and tear. Some are nicked, cracked, whittled to a point or painted with the orange and white stripes that signal “caution.” Vitale received the pine blocks in perfect condition; she inflicted the signs of wear on each. She played God in the most painstaking, obsessive way: trying to exact the random, nuanced destruction of cut-down, cut-up trees endures when put to industrial use. 601 S. Anderson St., downtown; through Feb. 27. (323) 980-9000, venusovermanhattan.com.

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HIGH DRAMA IN THE HIGH DESERT

Inland Empress is a powerful female story first and a crime drama second

BY GWYNEDD STUART

Athough we never see far beyond the cozy confines of a modest home’s dated living room, it’s apparent within the first few minutes of local playwright Tom Cavanaugh’s Inland Empress that the greater environment in which the home exists is hugely impactful in the lives of its denizens. On a horse farm somewhere in the farthest reaches of Southern California’s remote Inland Empire, we meet a family of four whose collective way of life has been shaped by the greater environment.

Inland Empress could be received as a hard-boiled crime drama with a mostly female cast, but really it’s a powerful story of female relationships with crime-drama window dressing. When it comes to dropping bombs, Cavanaugh pulls no punches, but strong performances by the women — Knight in particular — prevent it from devolving into melodrama.

For a small black-box theater, the set design is terrifically evocative. Old table lamps affixed to the walls look silly at first but wind up casting the set in a soft, yellowish glow evocative of a room where lots of cigarettes have been smoked over the years. It feels as honest as the story itself, which builds to the conclusion that there are only two ways out of it all — and neither leads to a happy ending.

THEATER LISTINGS

Ham: A Musical Memoir

Broadway veteran Sam Harris wrote and stars in this musical memoir of his life, which played off Broadway last winter. The one-man show is based on his book, Ham: Slices of Life, and follows him from his conflicted childhood in Oklahoma through his showbiz career to the present day, where he is a father. Tony nominee Billy Porter (Lola in Kinky Boots) directs. Harris, who won TV’s talent competition Star Search in 1983, also sings in the show, under Todd Schroeder’s musical direction. —Katie Buenneke

Los Angeles LGBT Center, 1125 N. McCadden Place, Hollywood; through Feb. 7. (323) 880-7300, lalgbccenter.org/theatre.

Pillars of New York

In this new musical by Michael Antin, four New York couples and their mutual therapist struggle to come to terms with the events of 9/11. As the couples start to recover, their therapist has to deal with his own loss and sense of mortality. The show posits that everyone’s stories about 9/11 are the new pillars of New York, now that the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers are gone. Jim Blanchette directs this world-premiere production, presented by NoHo’s Write Act Repertory.


Neva

Neva first appeared in Los Angeles 4½ years ago, as part of REDCAT’s Radar L.A. festival, and we loved it then. Guillermo Calderón’s play, set in 1905 Russia, follows Anton Chekhov’s widow, Olga, an actress who comes to St. Petersburg after her husband’s death to join an acting troupe there. Much to her dismay, Olga finds that her acting skills have diminished considerably following her husband’s demise, and her fellow actors help her through a sort of therapy session, re-enacting Chekhov’s death as the Russian revolution creeps closer. Diana Wyenn directs this production, which is presented by Shock Pulse, a new production company.


FOREVER HOUSE IS A HEFTY, HUMOROUS DOMESTIC DRAMA

Forever House is set in a child’s bedroom. Ben and Jack, a couple, are pregnant with their first child. In order to pay for their child’s medical expenses, they decide to sell their home in a straight, suburban community and buy a home in a gay community. However, their decision doesn’t go over well with the neighbors, who are more resistant to the idea than they expected.

THEATER REVIEW

The performance is well executed, with great chemistry between the actors and good pacing throughout. The play is a witty and poignant exploration of the difficulties faced by gay couples in a heteronormative society.

—Katie Buenneke

January 28–30
DANCE
Meg Wolfe
New Faithful Disco
WORLD PREMIERE

February 4–14
THEATER
The Wooster Group
The Room by Harold Pinter
WORLD PREMIERE

February 18–21
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FEB 6 @7:30pm
Lion Dance (Kagamijishii)
Aratani Theatre (244 S. San Pedro St., Los Angeles, CA 90012)

FEB 11 @7:30pm
The Haunted Sword (Kagotsurube)
Billy Wilder Theater in Hammer Museum
(10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024)

FEB 13 @7:30pm
Togitatsu no Utare: Noda Version
AMC Rolling Hills 20 (2591 Airport Dr., Torrance, CA 90505)

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*The Finest Hours* is square, all right — but also exciting and humane

**BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL**

There’s an odd thing to say of a lavishly expensive, 3-D IMAX maritime disaster flick that hits theaters just a month after the last one: They don’t make them like this anymore. There’s a reason for that, of course — the parents and grandparents who like ’em stolid and corny don’t flood the theaters on opening weekend. But they’ll be in luck, a couple years from now, when *The Finest Hours* pops up on TBS. As if hopped up on its own heroes’ last-century can-do zeal, Craig Gillespie’s earnest, square-jawed period piece puts its head down and gets its familiar rescue-drama done. No obstacle will stop Gillespie’s crowd-pleasing: our weariness, just weeks after *In the Heart of the Sea*, of the undulations of CGI tidal waves? *The Finest Hours* makes them a highlight in a lurching, dizzying set piece that in suspense and imaginative brio bests last year’s superhero flicks. *Our American Sniper*-era skepticism of simple stories in which our armed forces face down the impossible and straight-up triumped? *The Finest Hours* has the chutzpah to sell us Chris Pine as the runt of the impossible and straight-up triumped. Sure, coxswain Webber is embodied by Chris “Captain Kirk” Pine, but he’s a shy, by-the-book young man whom the movie asks us to think of as something like Steve Rogers before he takes his Captain America super-serum. Gillespie is by the book as well. As a director, he’s like the middle-class citizens in a politician’s speech: He works hard, plays by the rules. If the script is hokey, and the computer-generated storms over the top, Gillespie honors the story’s working-folks gravity with excellent on-set and location shooting. With care and ingenuity, he and cinematographer Javier Aguirresarobe tour us through the doomed tanker’s decks, corridors and flooding engine room, establishing a lived-in physical reality that makes the inevitable destruction feel momentous. He only offers up today’s *de rigueur* computer-aided soaring camera flourishes when a moment warrants one, and the best — when a worker discovers that the storm has cracked the tanker in half — is a model of how early restraint can improve later payoffs.

The less everyone chats, and the more they set themselves to problem solving, the more arresting the film gets. (The exception: Grainger’s tense scenes facing down the Coast Guard brass, demanding they call her husband-to-be back from his apparently doomed mission.) *The Finest Hours* peaks too early, perhaps, with the seamen’s attempt to rig up a new tiller and run the captain-less half-ship aground before it sinks. Casey Affleck, as a taciturn engineer, crafts a complex rip-up of chains and I-beams in the engine room; then the crew on deck hoist orders down to him, telephone-game style, through the cramped corridors. The filmmakers have little compunction about simplifying and glossing-up the real derring-do all this is based on, but they never come up with any corresponding ingenuity for Webber. The third act suffers from this lapse into tastefulness. Once they have persevered through the breakers, risking it all to save those stranded on the tanker, Webber and his crew of three just bob along in the dark. They’ll do anything to rescue these strangers, but they can’t find them, and Gillespie — hardworking though he is — just can’t pound their idle floating and peering into drama. But in its story and its storytelling, *The Finest Hours* exemplifies perseverance. Look at how hard the real Webber worked. And look at how hard Gillespie and crew worked. If you get that far, you’re going to grind on through with them. You’ll be rewarded not just with a happy ending but also with one more taut sequence of desperate decision-making: How do you rescue 32 men with a tiny boat that the sea keeps trying to dash? Forget the occasional fussiness and lulls. The real reason they don’t make them like this these days is that the creators of blockbusters have forgotten that the loss of life is a tragedy, and that seeing it spared is more edifying than seeing it snuffed.

*THE FINEST HOURS* | Directed by Craig Gillespie  
Written by Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson, based on the book by Casey Sherman and Michael J. Tougias | Walt Disney Pictures | Citywide

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**BROTHERLY LOVE GETS A WORKOUT IN MOUNTAIN MEN**

Writer-director Cameron Labine seems to want to prove the obsolescence of the lovable-slacker stereotype even as he flogs it for entertainment value. Tyler Labine’s Topher is one of two major characters in the fraternal comedy *Mountain Men*, but Topher does 99 percent of the work. He first concocts a detailed fib to lure his unsuspecting brother Cooper (Chace Crawford), recently in from the city, to the family’s remote cabin. Later, after Cooper blindly wanders into the snowy night under the influence of drug-laced cookies, Topher literally drags his brother’s body, sweating and grunting, through miles of cold, craggy wilderness. What’s weird about this: Topher is the hirsute, pot-smoking, unambitious schmuck to Crawford’s high-altitude city boy, and he frequently puts himself down while doing all this heavy lifting. Cameron and Tyler Labine are real-life brothers, and the script channels observations about family and societal expectations through the conventions of the road movie, the buddy comedy and the various meanings of “camping trip.” Eventually, light-hearted comedy gives way to a more serious survival tale — presumably to allow Tophet to prove his mettle. The conflict continues to rest heavily on their contrasting types, which both actors have experience playing on television, especially Crawford as pampered high-school dreamboat Nate Archibald on *Gossip Girl*. Cooper, a roundly admired yet professionally frustrated golden boy, may as well be Nate 2.0. He spends the first half of the film looking aloof, and the rest groaning in pain; meanwhile, Labine’s Topher gets all the laughs — and the sympathy. Topher forges ahead bravely, but it’s all too clear that he’s headed toward an underwhelming conclusion. —Abby Garnett

*MOUNTAIN MEN* | Written and directed by Cameron Labine  
| Level 33 | Arena Cinema
The Tao of Ass-Kick

Kung Fu Panda 3

By Alan Scherstuhl

there’s essentially one joke in the Kung Fu Panda movies. A ridiculous, adorable creature executes some extravagant action-flick flourish—vaulting over roofs, dropping a bad guy, striking a poster-perfect superhero pose. Then the battle music fades and the adorable creature breaks badass character to remind us it’s totally relatable, even human: It wheezes to catch its breath, it asks with gentle awkwardness “Me?” when told he has to be a hero, and he’s obliged, every few minutes, to gulp from Popeye’s spinach can? That’s a sturdy gag, endearing—some reason by Dustin Hoffman, he’s always all talk, because it’s funny. That said, if you don’t think you have to stand there and let us know that they know those beats are tired and dumb? I’m just leveling up, or a gulp from Popeye’s spinach can? It’s a way to grow and discover who you are. The series’ strongest asset is the way it’s invested in something derivative: This is a master of chi, which we learn with a fresher story.)

Second, he must become a master of chi, which we learn with endless variations on that one joke, Kung Fu Panda 3 is lively, well-engineered nonsense. The series’ strongest quality has always been its inventive funny-animal martial-arts throw-downs, staged and animated with wit and clarity. That holds true here, especially during a lengthy brawl in a village full of pandas. These dashing, pudgy fluffballs have been trained by the hero to be subordinate heroes themselves, ribbon-dancing through the battle or catapaulting out of hammocks at their low-ranking counterpart enemies.

Fights and training scenes get diced up with engaging split-screen, and the animators often chuck dull photorealism for the lyric and luminous: orange skies, jagged mountain backdrops, the floating cliff-islands of a cold-climate Sping Bemain. One lesson actually seems thought through by the filmmakers, at least for a while. Our hero meets his real father, a panda voiced by Bryan Cranston, who upsets the goose who raised him. This trio soon gels into a loving and supportive two-dad, cross-species family, which is somewhat affecting — until the dads seal their bond by strapping on armor and stomp some bad guys. The only way to grow and discover who you are, in the Panda-verse, is through fighting, and your only reward for having done so is that you get better at fighting. Then you have to stand there and pant, because it’s funny.

Kung Fu Panda 3

Directed by
Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carlon | DreamWorks | Citywide

is a good heart and a training montage. Go on, America, keep yelling at Common Core while parking your kids in front of this stuff.

The panda botches his first stab at teaching, but rest assured, he soon will have the chance to prove his worth through violent adventure. His master teaches him that kicking and punching is not the key to chi, but that’s only technically true. In the climax, it’s the love of his friends and family that awakens the spirit of chi inside him, and that makes him better at kicking and punching. Whatever overarching lesson the screenwriters are after is beyond me. If chi comes from being beloved, why does everyone else earn it through decades of solitude? And why is enlightenment pretty much just leveling up, or a gulf from Popeye’s spinach can? That will, if you don’t think about it, and if you’re on board with endless variations on that one joke, Kung Fu Panda 3 is likely, well-engineered nonsense.

In studio movies, especially the kids’ fare, parents might perk up at that, probably shouldn’t power three full films, even afternoon-killers for the kiddos. Almost every moment of martial-arts action is undercut by some spin on that single joke, and then every joke or moment of feeling is quickly dashed aside for another keep-us-dazzled moment of martial-arts action. The movie undercut’s its own undercutting.

And as with the Shrek pictures, Kung Fu Panda 3 is cause to wonder: What does it mean when kids’ first exposure to hero’s-journey story beats comes from self-aware meta-adventure whose creators feel obliged, every few minutes, to let us know that they know those beats are tired and dumb? I don’t quail for the children, but here’s hoping that when they act out movie-like stories with their action figures they can do so earnestly, and not offer jokey half-assed apologies for being invested in something derivative.

Speaking of derivative: This time our appropriatin’ panda (gameily voiced by Jack Black) has to learn to be himself so that he can have a long-shot chance at defeating, through spirited fantasy violence, precisely the kind of enemies he’s triumphed over in two previous movies. (Despite his track record, he’s always all “Me!” when told he has to be a hero.)

His master, a red panda named Master Shifu and voiced for some reason by Dustin Hoffman, charges him early on with two tasks. First, he must become the teacher/leader of his squad of mixed-animal kung-fu champs, which includes a monkey, viper and a praying mantis voiced by Jackie Chan, Lucy Liu and Seth Rogen, respectively. (Any of those characters might have inspired the writers to come up with a fresher story.)

Second, he must become a master of chi, which we learn usually involves 30 years of silent contemplation in a cave. Parents might perk up at that, but alas, Kung Fu Panda 3 doesn’t have the patience for 30 seconds of quiet — and it turns out that chi mastery, like martial-arts skills, can be picked up lickety-split.

In studio movies, especially for children, all it takes to be great at something difficult
GO ON THE SHADOW OF WOMEN
Few filmmakers explore the mysteries of coupling as touchingly as post–Newwave Vague maestro Philippe Garrel, who specializes in mapping out romantic triangles (whether acute, obtuse or oblique). The rich enigmas of his latest movie, about a husband and wife both in their 40s and each unfaithful to the other, start with its evocative title. And in so shrewdly exploring the illusions — namely (self-) deception — required to keep a couple functioning, Garrel shows just how much we all remain, consciously or not, in the dark. Penumbra are everywhere in this film, which was shot in velvet-smokey, high-contrast lighting, making the illusions — namely (self-) deception — evocative as well. And in so shrewdly exploring the mysteries of coupling, Garrel presents us with a distinctly romantic and old-school classic everyone should experience at least once. Bonus fact: Ben-Hur premiered at the Egyptian in 1959, making this a homecoming, Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood.; Sat., Jan. 30, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com/los-angeles/egyptian-theatre.

In a widely misconstrued article published last summer, when debate over the Confederate flag reached its tipping point, the New York Post's Lu Mumenick suggested that we start turning our attention to cultural artifacts instead of a commercial property — the province of museums rather than movie theaters, and something to be contemplated rather than celebrated. Still the highest-grossing film of all time when adjusted for inflation, the David O. Selznick–produced, Victor Fleming–directed antibellum epic from 1939 will always have a place in history — even if future generations don’t look back on it as fondly. Aero Theatre, 1328 Pico Boulevard, (310) 399-7003.

OPENING THIS WEEK

DIRTY GRANDPA
Call it a dissenting opinion if you must, but Dirty Grandpa has sporadic moments of hilarity: the spontaneous “USA! USA!” chant that erupts after an out-of-his-mind Zac Efron announces to spring breakers that he’s just unknowingly smoked crack, or Aubrey Plaza commanding as foreplay that Robert De Niro, as the grandfather of the title, “tell me the buttons on your remote control are so small you can’t find Fox News.” Efron’s Johnson doesn’t want to be at a keg with his semi-estranged pop-pop, but unless you actively resist Dirty Grandpa, you may occasionally join him in having a good time against your better judgment. But for every moment that’s funny, there are plenty that aren’t. And as the tagline cleverly teases, “Tell me the buttons on your remote control are so small you can’t find Fox News.” Efron’s Johnson doesn’t want to be at a keg with his semi-estranged pop-pop, but unless you actively resist Dirty Grandpa, you may occasionally join him in having a good time against your better judgment. But for every moment that’s funny, there are plenty that aren’t.

YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DOT LIST

Tributes to David Bowie, Penelope Spheeris
Friday, Jan. 29
Penelope Spheeris probably will always be best known for directing Wayne’s World, but her body of work extends far beyond the SNL skit-turned-movie — though much of it is equally musical. UCLA’s weekend tribute to the writer-director commences with Dudes on 35mm. The road-trip comedy tells of two city punks trekking westward in a Volkswagen Bug; their mellow is harassed considerably by the murder of their friend thus launching the eponymous dudes on a quest for revenge. Spheeris will appear in person, as will screenwriter Randall Johnson and star Jon Cryer. UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wiltshire Blvd., Westwood; Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinema.ucla.edu.

Acts of murder as seen (and experienced) through the lens of a camera have provided the premise of many a disturbing classic, from Rear Window to Peeping Tom. Michelangelo Antonioni’s Blow-Up is another example, and one of the most accomplished. An enormous counter-cultural success that helped destroy the outdated Production Code, the Italian auteur’s English-language debut concerns a British fashion photographer (David Hemmings) who accidentally bears witness to a murder. Antonioni received Oscar nods for his direction and screenplay. Nuart Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A.; Fri., Jan. 29, 11:59 p.m.; $11. (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com/los-angeles/nuart-theatre.

Saturday, Jan. 30
The American Cinematheque’s 70mm series continues with Ben-Hur, though it isn’t actually screening in that most glorious of formats. William Wyler’s biblical epic, shot in Ultra Panavision and starring Charlton Heston, won a record-setting 11 Oscars (a feat since matched by Titanic and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King) and made huge bucks. It’s a sweeping, sometimes overstated saga, and very much the kind of old-school classic everyone should experience at least once. Bonus fact: Ben-Hur premiered at the Egyptian in 1959, making this a homecoming, Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood.; Sat., Jan. 30, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

In the widely misconstrued article published last summer, when debate over the Confederate flag reached its tipping point, the New York Post’s Lu Mumenick suggested that we start turning our attention to cultural artifacts instead of a commercial property — the province of museums rather than movie theaters, and something to be contemplated rather than celebrated. Still the highest-grossing film of all time when adjusted for inflation, the David O. Selznick–produced, Victor Fleming–directed antibellum epic from 1939 will always have a place in history — even if future generations don’t look back on it as fondly. Aero Theatre, 1328 Pico Boulevard, (310) 399-7003.

The Man Who Fell to Earth
Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Sat., Jan. 30, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

Sunday, Jan. 31
“Forever and ever,” Davis Bowie’s corporeal form may be no more, but he was never as earthbound as the rest of us anyway. Cinemafax pays tribute to the late, great icon throughout the week, including several screenings of the role that plays into his otherworldly persona: The Man Who Fell to Earth. As the alien of the title, Bowie comes to our planet seeking refuge from his drought-stricken homeland (good thing he didn’t land in present-day California). Nić Roeg’s enigmatic whistler gave Ziggy Stardust his first starring role, and many still consider it his best. Cinemafax/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Sun., Jan. 31, 4:45 & 8 p.m.; Mon., Feb. 1, 10:45 p.m.; Tue., Feb. 2, 10:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 655-2510, cinemafax.org.

Monday, Feb. 1
Bowie was a singular talent, so fuck it — head back to Cinemafax and see Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence as well. Less cosmic but just as highly regarded, Nagisa Ôshima’s World War II drama stars Bowie as a prisoner of war being held by the Japanese. The camp commandant is drawn to the way Bowie’s character defies his strict orders, leading to a number of unusual dynamics forming between inmates and detainees. Ôshima was a masterful, often controversial filmmaker, and this was his first movie shot in English. Cinemafax/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Mon., Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 655-2510, cinemafax.org.

Tuesday, Feb. 2
If you’ve yet to see of TAMC’s Wednesday Hitchcock screening — and really, how could you? — trek to the Bing Theater once more for Rebecca. The master of suspense’s first movie production stars Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine as an ultra-wealthy widower and his second wife. Though never seen, the title character (his first wife) casts a pall over the entire gothic tale, which has the distinction of winning Best Picture (then called Outstanding Production) at the Academy Awards without receiving a single nomination in the writing, directing or acting categories. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Tue., Feb. 2, 1 p.m.; $5. (323) 857-6000, lacma.org. —Michael Nordine

THE BIG SHORT
Fueled by impotent, blustery outrage, Adam McKay’s The Big Short, about the grotesque banking and investing practices that led to the 2008 financial collapse, is about as fun and enlightening as a cranked-up portfolio manager’s rue-filled comeback comedy following an in-his-hedgehogs, too self-consciously cute, and the words “dead and buried” is hard to believe her. (Abbey Bender)
the audience, a device deployed to di-
minishing return. The eclectics extolled
include Michael Burry (Christian Bale),
an M.D. and money manager who invents
the credit default swap, and Mark Baum
(Steve Carell, also hideously coiffed), an
obnoxious hedge fund manager whose
backstory involving a dead-by-suicide
brother somehow positions him as the
film’s chief nemesis: a flawed, radicalized
American.

The stupefying cloyingness of the finale
makes me hope that the next economics
film to be adapted, even as a lavish
musical, is Thomas Piketty’s Capital in the
21st Century. (Melissa Anderson)

BRIDGE OF SPIES
Steven Spielberg’s true-
story Cold War procedural Bridge of Spies has
easy to feel how the United States and
Russia thought this permafrost would
last forever. The story starts in 1957,
when a story begins in 1957,
the year Donovan was drafted to defend
a 1950s immigrant struggling to find her
place in the world. With an open, innocent
countenance equally capable of register-
ing joy and moral uncertainty, Ronan

Saoirse Ronan makes
a grand case for herself as the millen-
nial generation’s finest leading lady in
Brooklyn, an immaculately crafted,
immersion-defying coming-of-age tale
about a 1950s immigrant struggling to find
her place in the world. With an open, innocent
countenance equally capable of register-
ing tremulous separation anxiety, exha-
usting joy and moral uncertainty, Ronan
is a marvel of nuanced expressiveness
throughout this story, adapted by writer
Nick Hornby from Colm Tóibín’s novel.

Carriage house occupying
from the slightest of looks and exchanges.
Hornby and director John Crowley de-
tail the plight of Ellis Lacey (Ronan), a
20-something Irish girl who travels to
New York, leaving her beloved older sister Rose
(Fiona Glascott) to care for their mother
(Jane Brennan). In the States, a kindly
priest (Jim Broadbent) helps Ellis secure
lodging at a boardinghouse run by the
strict but compassionate Mrs. Kehoe (Julie
Walters), and work at a department store.
It’s a foreign life full of lingering homesick-
ness, acclimation-induced distress and
wide-eyed excitement, the last of which
blossoms after Ellis attends a local dance
and meets Tony Fiorello (Emyr Cohen),
a sweet Italian plumber with whom she soon
falls headlong into an affair. Their amour is
complicated by a family tragedy that calls
Ellis back to Ireland, where her mother
and her best friend unsuspectingly conspire
to pair her with a single sutor (Dominn Gleenos)
in order to re-enthrone her in her
native land. The question of what — and
how one — defines home becomes an
urgent dilemma for Ellis, as she’s pulled in
two directions by competing feelings and
forces. (Nick Schager)

THE MARTIAN
Desperation, anxiety, stub-
bornly saying yes to survival: If grand
struggles are your thing, there are plenty
in Ridley Scott’s The Martian, based on
Andy Weir’s novel, which was first self-
published in 2011 and then picked up
by Crown in 2014 — itself a rare seedling
that took root against all odds. In both
novel and movie, American astronaut
Mark Watney is stranded on Mars when his
couple crew members leave him for
death after a ferocious dust storm. He
comes to, alone on a planet indifferent to
his existence, and presumably he’s simply
going to die. But he doesn’t: Even on a
dust-dry rock, Watney figures out how
to make water; using his own excrement
for manure, he succeeds in conjuring an
indoor potato field. And because he’s a
scientist — a botanist — he keeps a log of
his experiences, one that’s both specific
in its technical detail and cheerfully
colloquial. interior monologues have a
“Hey, I might end up dead!” esprit. Heavy
on science patter, The Martian is all about
problem-solving; cozy American ingenuity
burns brightly in its heart. It’s partly
about a story man in peril; it’s mostly
a story about men (and a few women)
taking control of the uncontrollable. It’s
confident, swaggering science fiction, not
the despairing kind. That may be why, as
elaborate and expensive-looking as
The Martian is, it’s almost totally lacking in
poetry. This is an overwhelming picture,
oversized in its scope and ambition, and
the actors get ground in the machinery —
except for Matt Damon. His Watney is the
only one worth feeling anything for, and
whenever The Martian’s problems may be:
Damon is undoubtedly the best thing in it. (Stephanie Zacharek)

THE REVENANT
The backbreaking,
finger-freezing shoot for Alejandro G.
Iñárritu’s frostbitten survival thriller
The Revenant is as good an explanation
as any for why today’s movies are made by
actors in front of green screens: A flat
and stiff final product is a small price
to pay for ease and control. What’s
marvelous about The Revenant is the
improbable amount of control
Iñárritu and director of photography Emmanuel
Lubezki seem to wield, even out in
the wild. To tell this simplest of revenge
stories, set in the American Rockies in
the 1820s, the production shot for months
in inhospitable stretches of Canada
and Argentina, relying on natural light
and the cruel whims of the weather.
But the camera snakes through this wintry
hewl with all the dazzling fluidity
Iñárritu displayed in Birdman. Early on,
Pawnee ambush DiCaprio’s Hugh Glass and his
band of trappers; an intimate and ugly
battle threads through the poplars,
rich with brutal incident. In one wheeling
and impossible shot, Iñárritu follows a traper
or a Pawnee, then another coming
from another direction, and then another
still. It’s a nerve-racking breakdown for
depictions of battlefield chaos. Iñárritu
seems to dare audiences to vacate the
theater. There are staggering rigors and
frighteningly close encounters of
the near-death Glass crawling through snow
or wheezing with ice in his beard; there’s
the Malickian zone-out shots of the moon
and sun burning through clouds; there’s
the grunting lead performance from
DiCaprio, who barely speaks; there’s
Lazer Team’s take on the survive-the-night-in-
carcass routine, with a steamy abun-
dance of horse innards — it’s Matthew
Barney meets The Empire Strikes Back.

Spotlight
Mike Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), Sacha Pfeiffer
(Brie Larson), Matt Carroll (John Slattery) and
director Walter “Robby” Robinson
(Michael Keaton), who together lead the
Spotlight staff to investigate. When I
look back on the film years from now, I’ll
picture McAdams’ Pfeiffer, dressed in
unflattering pants and an untucked shirt,
hooing to meet a source at a South End
cafe. News reporting means writing, but
it also means getting out of the office. You
don’t crack a story like this one by trolling
the Web to see what already-broken news
you can repackag. (Stephanie Zacharek)

LAZER TEAM MAY BE 2016’S MOST
ENTERTAINING SUPERHERO MOVIE
Matt Hulum’s agreeably silly 1980s homage
Lazer Team deserves to be the breakthrough
for the Rooster Teeth comedy troupe
Super Troopers was for Broken Lizard. In a small
Texas town, four local screw-ups — ineffectual sheriff’s deputy
Hagan (Burnie Burns), his estranged high-school friend
Herman (Colton Dunn), teenage malcontent Zach
(Michael Jones) and haysseed Woody (Gavin Free) —
accidentally intercept an alien battle suit intended
for government-trained hunk Adam (Alan Ritchson).
They must learn to work together to battle an imminent
alien invasion after the four parts of the suit (helmet, laser
and boots) attach to their bodies, and the laser-
wielding Zach brands them as the Lazer [sic] Team. (The
film acknowledges Zach’s poor spelling.)

Unfortunately, it’s quite the sausage fest; the only
female character who gets a name or significant screen
time is Hagan’s teenage daughter, Mindy (Alexandria
DeBerry), whose main characteristic is her bangability.

Indieographically-funded picture is still a far better time
than the recent financial disasters it thematically resembles,
Chris Columbus’ $88 million pixels and Josh Trank’s
$120 million Fantastic Four. And because it’s made
by people who understand the importance of a clever
script and want their audience to have fun, Lazer Team
may prove to be 2016’s most entertaining superhero
movie. — Sherilyn Connelly

Lazer Team | Directed by Matt Hulum | Amplify
Releasing | Burbank Town Center and on-demand

Newcomer: Room

Eilis (Saoirse Ronan) makes
a choice to elope with
American Ned (Harry
Stanton), who together
lead the Spotlight staff to
investigate. When I
look back on the film years from now, I’ll
picture McAdams’ Pfeiffer, dressed in
unflattering pants and an untucked shirt,
hooing to meet a source at a South End
cafe. News reporting means writing, but
it also means getting out of the office. You
don’t crack a story like this one by trolling
the Web to see what already-broken news
you can repackag. (Stephanie Zacharek)
LET’S GET MUGGED

With his killer new backing band, The Muggers, Ty Segall remains L.A.’s most prolific and enigmatic rock star

BY ARTEMIS THOMAS-HANSARD

Onstage at the Teragram Ballroom for the first of two sold-out shows, Ty Segall’s new band The Muggers builds up to a furious crescendo for the instrumental bridge to “Feel” from his 2014 album, Manipulator. As they play, Segall bolts off the stage. He rushes into a side stairwell, where a handful of friends have been dancing for the last hour of his set. Cannonballing past them in his studded Canadian tuxedo, he pauses halfway down the stairs, next to the L.A. music scene’s few bona fide rock stars, though he would be the last to admit it.

“I don’t know about that, man, that’s crazy,” he says with a laugh in response to the rock-star tag. There’s a note of humility in his voice, but his tone leans more toward genuine disbelief. He stutters slightly through attempts to talk about Ty Segall the Artist, a persona he downplays with comments such as “My head is always fuzzy” and “I don’t always have an answer for these questions” in response to queries about the messages behind his music. His magnetism is a mystery, even to himself.

Segall churns out tracks like a factory, through an ever-expanding list of touring bands, one-off projects and unexpected collaborations — such as Broken Bat, a punk trio formed with Redd Kross’ Steven McDonald and The Melvins’ Dale Crover, and the Stooges-esque GØGGS, featuring Ex-Cult’s Chris Shaw. He also adds constantly to his already impressive résumé as a producer, working with everyone from White Fence’s Tim Presley to his own hard-rock trio Fuzz, usually in his famously cramped home studio, which currently occupies a tiny, converted laundry room.

But for someone who’s constantly releasing new music, Segall remains an enigma. Which is exactly what he’s going for.

“I just wanted a really intense band to be super nasty,” he says of The Muggers, whose other projects he cites as among his few sources of contemporary inspiration. “I’m not the biggest fan of modern music, to be honest,” he admits, though he notes Kendrick Lamar and Madlib as shining exceptions. “A lot of modern rap is really interesting, but it’s hard to be interested in modern rock music. … I’m really lucky, I admire mostly just my friends.”

Segall’s lack of interest in modern rock doesn’t come as a shock; he’s known for music that is obviously informed by the 1960s and 70s. But he doesn’t want to endlessly mine the past, either. “I feel like nostalgia is great, but I think it’s pretty cool to have a nostalgic thing with a heavy dose of modernism thrown in,” he says.

To that end, he constantly seeks new ways to shake up his process. “At this point, I’m way too aware of what I’ve already done. There needs to be a different way in to that creative process now, whether that’s a keyboard, getting stoned, laying down drums first or trying to write a song at 6 in the morning.”

But while he’s always chasing ways to evolve, Segall remains at heart a lover of solid, simple, unironic rock & roll. “It’s very crucial to not hyper-intellectualize music so much,” he says. “You can intellectualize all day long, but if the song sucks, the song sucks. All this stuff doesn’t really matter if the music is bad. That’s always been the focus.”
Chef Roy Choi makes sure the music in his restaurants is as hip and eclectic as the food on your plate.

By Jeff Weiss

Nothing captures the spirit of a Southern California cookout better than DJ Quik's “Pitch in on a Party.” So it’s only right that L.A.’s day-off anthem bumps silkily from the speakers at the opening of LocoL, the latest culinary banger from native son Roy Choi.

It’s Martin Luther King Day on 103rd Street in Watts, the economically depressed neighborhood that produced Jay Rock, Simon Rodia’s famous towers and the 1965 insurrection. If Choi succeeds, LocoL’s healthy but affordable fast-food fusion will help revitalize this oft-overlooked corner of the county.

So far, so good. As a first-day goodwill gesture, Choi feeds all interested parties for free. There’s a two-hour wait. Locals man the kitchen. Others in black Watts shirts pass out granola bars and water to those waiting—a diverse cross-section ranging from Highland Park craft beer enthusiasts to Grape Street Crips. Neighborhood kids breakdance to Zapp, Warren G and Egyptian Lover.

Celebrities on hand include Lena Dunham, Eric Garcetti, Tyrese and director Jon Favreau (Choi co-produced his last film, Chef), a random guest list that speaks to the near-universal appeal of the affordable entrepreneur behind the Kogi truck, Chego and the Line hotel’s restaurants. It’s a level of local reverence usually achieved only by Lakers legends or Compton rappers.

As for rappers themselves, Choi’s clearly their favorite chef. Dilated Peoples, Alchemist and Black Thought all tweet about LocoL’s opening, testimony to the impeccable musical ear and artistic flair Choi applies to his restaurants and cooking.

“There’s a natural connection between music and cooking—sometimes it’s like a DJ feeling the room in how you pick up on different senses in the kitchen,” the 45-year-old says a few weeks earlier, wearing a black beanie, Stussy jacket and myriad tattoos. A playlist blares Young Thug, Future and Fetty Wap—a far cry from the staid hotel kitchens where he started.

Much ink has been spilled about Choi’s brilliant alchemy of Latin and Asian cooking, less about his omnivorous and encyclopedic musical taste. You can see it in the soundtracks of his establishments. Kogi’s early years featured a transistor tape-deck radio blaring K-pop and ’90s hip-hop. Chego spins ’80s and ’90s rap—“It’s like my car in high school,” Choi says. A-Frame warranted softer indie electronica, while the Line spans Motown, ’70s funk, ’90s R&B, Korean hip-hop and local indie linchpins Brainfeeder and Stones Throw.

“I try to immerse myself completely in whatever I do. We’re trying to go into the culture and all the way back out,” Choi says. “That’s why we didn’t just want to open a place in Watts; we wanted to do it with the approval of the community. I’m always trying to listen and learn.”

An L.A. native, Jeff Weiss edits Passion of the Weiss and hosts the Shots Fired podcast. Find him online at passionweiss.com.
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ON THE WESTERN WORLD

On the bus as we roll through a sunny winter’s day in France, on our way to Leuven, Belgium. Several minutes ago, as we disembarked from the ferry that took us from Dover to Calais, our longtime bus driver Jan-Sven advised us to look out the left side of the bus for the Syrian refugee camp that soon would come into view.

Further on, the camp degenerated into mess, tarp-covered, improvised structures, amidst piles of garbage. These were the remnants of what was initially provided as France scrambled to accommodate what ended up being thousands of people.

Construction was under way. The camp is being moved back from the road, as men had been attempting to leave the camp and jump onto passing trucks.

France can’t keep these people on the side of a highway forever. Eventually they will have to assimilate into the population. For a country that is struggling economically, it will be an incredible test. Who knows where these people would be if not for the generosity of the French.

Further on, the camp degenerated into mess, tarp-covered, improvised structures, amidst piles of garbage. These were the remnants of what was initially provided as France scrambled to accommodate what ended up being thousands of people.

In my own featherweight way, I have done this, or tried to do it, with my life. As I move for thousands of years, as many have sought for thousands of years, as many have sought to bring protective sleeves and archive boxes intact, plus great-condition copies of Thin Lizzy’s late bass-playing leader, Phil. One of the many upsides of this mode of existence is that, if one is so inclined, on an almost daily basis there are record stores to be visited. With more than 600 shows behind us, road manager Ward and I have circled the world for nearly a decade and have darkened the doorways of many a shop. This time out has been no different.

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So far, a small shop in Frankfurt that I have been going to for years yielded a great-condition copy of Kraftwerk’s “Die Mensch-Maschine.” Copenhagen’s excellent Sound Station, a mandatory stop, had an almost perfect copy of Albert Ayler’s jazz/soul/gospel/out-there New Grass album, complete with heavy, laminated stock cover. This will be my third copy. The first one, on CD, lived with me in my small apartment in NYC. One day I was at Iggy’s, and we were talking about music. He said that he loved New Grass, hadn’t heard it in years and really missed it. I gave him my copy and eventually found another. Can’t wait to hear this one on LP!

A small shop in Bristol, England, had an A-label promo copy of Suicide’s “Dream Baby Dream”/”Radiation” single on the ZE label. A great band from Bristol, Spectres, brought me some of their rarer vinyl that night as a gift. Days later in London, Dave Ruffy, the mighty drummer of The Ruts and Ruts DC, gave me an unplayed copy of the first pressing of their first single, as well as the Ruts DC’s “Weak Heart”/”Militant” single, promo only with info sheet. Score!

Without question, the best vinyl experience so far came out of Sutton, near the city of Dublin. Before the show, Ward and I spent hours visiting with Philomena Lynott, mother of Thin Lizzy’s late bass-playing leader, Phil. We were given full access to the man’s record collection. Standouts included Sabbath’s Paranoid on Vertigo with the swirl inner sleeve intact, plus great-condition copies of Houses of the Holy, Aladdin Sane and The Ramones’ Road to Ruin.

Philomena asked if we wanted to see Phil’s Thin Lizzy singles collection. Within a few minutes, I had them all on her couch, organizing them chronologically. I was hoping for test pressings and acetates and found none, but did check out all his earliest singles, like “Whisky in the Jar.”

I offered that if I could get back to Philomena’s place later in the year, I would be happy to bring protective sleeves and archive boxes for some preservation work. She said that would be great. So I have that to look forward to, as well as another chance to spend time with one of the most interesting people I have ever met.

Philomena’s story is worth checking out. A single mother in late-1940s Great Britain with a child whose father was black, hers was not the easiest road. To hear her tell the story, sitting in her living room, was a true privilege.

I know I am a lucky bastard with an irrevocably spoiled appetite. While it is not always the easiest day-to-day, I’ll take it. I am getting older, but this never gets old.
# February Happenings at Amoeba!

**there's ALWAYS something going on at Amoeba...**

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**Check Amoeba.com for updated information on all of our sales & events!**
Jenny Lewis & The Watson Twins, M. Ward @ IMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Ten years ago, Jenny Lewis took a sidestep from local indie band Rilo Kiley and released her first solo album, Rabbit Fur Coat, with the help of The Watson Twins. Identical twins Leigh and Chandra Watson acted as a kind of folkie Greek chorus, draping Lewis’ homespun country-pop tunes with soulfully shimmering harmonies. The record included a jangling power-pop cover of The Traveling Wilburys’ “Handle With Care,” which featured such guest vocalists as songwriter M. Ward. “Nothing is ever as good as it was,” Lewis mused at the time on the acoustic ballad “Melt Your Heart,” but she’s decided to tempt fate by revisiting the album live with Ward and the Watsons on a short, four-city tour. Taking a break from She & Him, Ward previews romantic confessions from his new LP, More Rain. Also Thursday, Jan. 28, and Saturday, Jan. 30. —Falling James

Jody Watley & Shalamar Reloaded @ THE ROXY
Grammy-winning pop legend, style icon and founding member of legendary R&B trio Shalamar, Jody Watley parted ways with that group in 1982 to enjoy a wildly successful solo career. In 2014, she acquired trademark rights to the group’s name. Now functioning as Shalamar Reloaded, sans other original group members, Watley maintains that her decision to reboot with choreographer Rosero McCoy and vocalist Nate Allen Smith was an attempt to “rebrand the group for the 21st century.” Some Shalamar fans, however, call the move “a hijack.” But who can blame her? Nostalgic fans attending this show should be prepared to experience Shalamar in its latest manifestation, not as some attempted revival of the group during its glory days. —Jacqueline Michael Whately

Harriet, Clara-Nova @ THE TROUBADOUR
“I have always seen you,” Alex Casnoff confides yearningly over a soulful collision of lonely piano and restless guitars, on Harriet’s new full-length, American Appetite. Casnoff is a former member of Dawes, and the singer-keyboardist brings some of that group’s folk-flavored introspection to the new album’s title track. But he also has his own vision, which he explores more fully on “Ten Steps.” In the video, Casnoff’s face is painted blue as he somberly announces, “Looking down at the evidence, I am detective/You are my crime scene.” Switching to a falsetto, he croons airily over an electronic-pop groove as he fronts a robotic chorus line. Led by French-American chanteuse Sydney Wayser, Clara-Nova is another band that mixes pop and electronica. “I built you up like a monument,” she coos amid the airy spaces of “This Side of Paradise.” —Falling James

Baked Potato All Stars @ THE BAKED POTATO
Guitarist Jeff Richman hosts one of L.A.’s longest-running jazz gigs, a monthly gathering of musical friends and occasional out-of-towners he calls the Baked Potato All Stars. Dozens of the world’s finest musicians have played in his band, which plays a mix of Richman’s well-craft ed originals and the occasional cover tune from such artists as Jeff Beck, Weather Report and the Mahavishnu Orchestra. This month’s gig features ex-members of those bands in keyboardist Mitch Forman (Mahavishnu), bassist Alphonso Johnson (Weather Report) and drummer Simon Phillips (Jeff Beck, as well as The Who and Toto). Seeing Phillips in an intimate venue is a rare treat — a well-known saxophonist who played on the same stage a few years ago described it as “like standing in front of a jet engine.” Also Saturday, Jan. 30. —Tom Meek

Julia Holter @ TERAGRAM BALLROOM
“I ask a fortune-teller what they whisper when I walk by,” Julia Holter intones amid an ethereal haze of violins on her fourth album, Have You in My Wilderness. “She said, ‘All the people run from the horizon.’” The local singer-pianist prefers to rush toward the horizon and embrace the strangeness of the world around her. “Betsy on the Roof” initially sounds like a straightforward sad piano ballad, but instead of romantic clichés, Holter offers such enigmatic asides as “I can’t send the rain down anymore” and “What of this cloud?” The track strays even further from the mainstream when the strings swell grandly at the end before unraveling amid spirals of Holter’s madhouse piano and breathy vocals. She has an ear for pop hooks but can’t resist turning the jaunty “Everytime Boots” into another dreamy digression. —Falling James

Buyepongo @ EL REY THEATRE
Simply put, Buyepongo are all about making music to dance your ass off to. And being homegrown L.A. melting-potters, they have a natural curiosity about what you can throw into the groove bowl to really shake ‘em down. Funky West Coast hip-hop and punk thump are stirred into their stewpot, along with a lot of ’60s soul, jazz and a dash of classic rock. But what gives Buyepongo a distinctive feel is their sorta scholarly investigation into Mexican folk music and the trad roots sounds of Colombia, Haiti, Belize, Honduras and the Dominican Republic. It’s wickedly addictive stuff, which you can check out on their just-out album, Todo Mundo. They throw down tonight with DJ sets by Cut Chemist, Changüí Majadero, Jeremy Sole and Dexter Story. —John Payne

Julia Holter: See Saturday.
1/28: HOLLY HERNDON
1/29: BEAUTY IN THE BREAKDOWN
1/30: JULIA HOLTER
2/5: REGGIE WATTS
2/6: LOLLIPPOP YOUR HEART OUT
2/9: ANDREW BIRD
2/12: ALO
2/24: ESCORT
3/1: RUN RIVER NORTH
3/3: EMPRESS OF
3/5: RON POPE + THE NIGHTHAWKS
3/16: THE REVIVALISTS
3/22: LUST FOR YOUTH
3/24: RA RA RIOT
3/25: CITIZEN + TURNOVER
4/1: WHITE DENIM
4/2: THE FLOOZIES
4/7: CULLEN OMORI
4/8: RJD2
4/9: TRIXIE WHITLEY
4/16: SUICIDE GIRLS: BLACKHEART BURLESQUE

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2/3: WARBRINGER+ENFORCER
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3/4: GLENN HUGHES
3/6: THE OTHER
3/8: I SEE STARS
3/11: PUDDLE OF MUDD
3/12: ULI JON ROTH W/ JENNIFER RATTEN & ANDY TIMMONS

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la WEEKLY

influences remain. Green Velvet, although his classic house and a remix of Joe Pompeo’s "On My Mind" bring in the darker synth tones of and a collaboration with Sonny Fodera, "Off On" identities have overlapped: A recent col-

bubbling. More recently, his producer bounce could still keep a dance fl  oor such as "Percolator," whose caff  einated certain timelessness to his work on cuts tracks since the early 1990s. There’s a Cajmere, Jones has been releasing hot head facet of his musical persona. As he’s in town as Cajmere, the house-

kids of the early 2000s. This Monday, heavy jams beloved by the electro-club Jones as Green Velvet, maker of synth-
tor Claude VonStroke. However, that was It hasn’t been long since we last gave Curtis Marshall as Cajmere, the house-

bassist Dominic Thiroux and drummer and a shaker in Los Angeles, and then Bublé and Hugh Laurie. He was a mover stars such as Carlos Santana, Michael youth in the limelight, sharing it with 13 -- if he might be about 20, but that’s how Marshall has looked ever since he actually was that age, a decade ago. Marshall spent much of his precocious youth in the limelight, sharing it with stars such as Carlos Santana, Michael Bublé and Hugh Laurie. He was a mover and a shaker in Los Angeles, and then he simply moved, leaving L.A. for the allure of Paris and touring Europe with a gypsy-jazz trio. The nomad returns to his old home with a quartet of some of the all-time greatest musicians, including bassist Dominic Thiroux and drummer Gene Cote. --Gary Fukushima

—Gary Fukushima

—Liz Ohanesian

—Daniel Kohn

—Paul Rogers

—Lily Moayeri

—Daniel Kohn


Might have recently noticed an exceptionally gifted saxophonist and clarinetist on stage with the iconic jazz singer. Robby Marshall is featured prominently on Wilson’s latest album, Coming Forth by Day (a tribute to Billie Holiday), playing earthen blues like an old soul buried beneath earth. He’s a true genius, one who has earned subgenre-transcending respect for his unique and innovative style. As grieving as the lyrics on Multi-Love are, the well-crafted album — one of the unexpected standouts of last year — is nonetheless cheerful, shrugging off the isolation of previous works. The Stevie Wonder–channeling “Ur Life One Night” brims with hope and possibilities, as if the listener is being offered a chance to start anew in the face of adversity. The song’s lyrics evocative of the struggle to find love in the modern world:

Unknown Mortal Orchestra @ THE FONDA THEATRE

Heartbreak is the motivator for many an album. Unknown Mortal Orchestra’s Ruban Nielson takes his a step further, mourning the departure of the extra person in his polyamorous relationship on UMO’s third album, aptly titled Multi-Love. As grieving as the lyrics on Multi-Love are, the well-crafted album — one of the unexpected standouts of last year — is nonetheless cheerful, shrugging off the isolation of previous works. The Stevie Wonder–channeling “Ur Life One Night” brims with tripped-out soul, while the chugge-induc-

ing “Can’t Keep Checking My Phone” tempers that sentiment with a playful, upbeat groove. The foggy psychedelia of previous albums is revisited on the Steely Dan–in-

spired "Necessary Evil," which features Nielson’s jazz-musician father, giving it a soulful Americana to bluesy roots-rock that segues freely from Mexican folk and history, as well as literal and figurative geography. East L.A. mainstays Los Lobos symbolize those cultural collisi-
sions by performing bilingual music that segues freely from Mexican folk and soulful Americana to bluesy roots-rock and even punk. Making tonight’s performance more intriguing, the veteran group will perform accompanied by the Ballet Folkórico Mexicano, a troupe that evokes the tradition of Mexican folk dancing through its dazzling spins, colorful dresses and floridly romantic choreography. --Failing James

Robby Marshall Quartet @ BLUEWHALE

Fans of Cassandra Wilson might have noticed a familiar face in the audience recently. It’s the husband of the iconic jazz singer, Robby Marshall. Marshall, a saxophonist and clarinetist, joins forces with the quartet for a stirring performance that evokes the tradition of Mexican folk dancing through its dazzling spins, colorful dresses and floridly romantic choreography. --Failing James

Robby Marshall Quartet

--Blue Whale

Coming Forth by Day

(a tribute to Billie Holiday)

Robby Marshall Quartet

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Robby Marshall Quartet

--Blue Whale

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ALL STAR LAKES: 4459 Eagle Rock Blvd. Turbulent Hearts, The Katellas, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., TBA.

AMOEBA MUSIC: 2990 S. Beverly Glen Blvd., Los Angeles. Empire State Express, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., TBA. The Hot Flashes, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA.

ANGEL CITY: 5205 E. Colorado St., Glendale. The Black Sheep, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA.

THE BAGUETTE: 3800 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles. Ladies of the Lake, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA.

THE BEACH: 2313 Ocean Front Walk, Ocean Beach. Jeff The Prophet, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., TBA. The Neighborhood Bar, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA.

BEACH BURRITO COMPANY: 414 W. Broadway, San Diego. The Beach Bums, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA. The Beach Bums, Mon., Feb. 1, 8 p.m., TBA.

THE BOWERY: 2702 Main St., Santa Monica. Taylor Swift, Thu., Feb. 4, 8:30 p.m., TBA. John Mayer, Fri., Feb. 5, 8 p.m., TBA. Joss Stone, Sat., Feb. 6, 8 p.m., TBA. Kari Kimmel, Sun., Feb. 7, 8:30 p.m., TBA.


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THE SMELL:
SILVERLAKE LOUNGE:
THE ROXY:
RESIDENT:

Coryell Trio, Tuesdays, 9 p.m., free. Triptease
29, 9 p.m., $10.
The Gitane Demone Quartet, Magnetized, Fri., Jan.
Mark Sells, Fri., Jan. 29, 7 p.m., $10. The Jacob
City. The Baked Potato Super Birthday All-Stars,
(see Music Pick). Enforcer, Warbringer, Exmortus,
2, 7:30 p.m., TBA. Sleep Machine, American Bulldog,
Reaktion, Pills Conspiracy, Molly Mothball, Tue., Feb.
Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA. In the Stars, Snake Fist,
Cardiac, Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., TBA. JFA, The Stitches,
Hollywood. Vampires Everywhere, Mursic, Pusher,
Kaustik, Art of Shock, Mon., Feb. 1, 8 p.m., $20. The
Skirts, Arise Roots, Soulutionaries, Tue., Feb. 2, 8 p.m., $31.
Jeff Parascalco, Thu., Feb. 4, 8 p.m., $5-$10.

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BOARDNERS | 1652 N. Cherokee Ave., Hollywood | Sat., Jan. 30, 10 p.m.-2 a.m. | $10; $5 with flyer, $15 after midnight; $20 if not properly attired | 21+ | barsinister.net

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DANCE CLUBS

THE AILIERON: 2419 N. Broadway, Los Angeles. Low End Theory, with resident DJs Daddy Kev, Nobody, The Gaslamp Killer, D-Styles and MC Nocando, Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.


AVON HOLLAND: 1735 Vine St., Los Angeles. Control, with DJs spinning dubstep and more, 19 & over, Fridays, 8 p.m.-3 a.m.; Moodboy, Hoodboy, Dakyl, Promnite, Fri., Jan. 29, 9:30 p.m., $20. Avaland, where DJs are in the house with techno, trance and more, 21 & over, Saturdays, 9:30 p.m.; Armada.


THE BLASTER: 1055 Mills Ave., Montclair. ‘90s Dance Party, with new wave, old school and freestyle favorites, Fridays, Saturdays, 7 p.m.-2 a.m., $5-$10.

THE THEATER AT ACE HOTEL: 929 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. Rob Roy, Moezia Maxa, Icy Hot, Fri., Jan. 29, 8:30 p.m., free. Dublab Vibing Time, with Dublab DJs, Saturdays, 1 p.m., free.

THE VIRGIL: 4519 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles. Planet Rock, with DJs Chuck Wild and Canyon Cody flipping hip-hop, funk, Latin, reggae, disco and house.

For more listings, please go to laweekly.com.

CONCERTS

FRIDAY, JAN. 29

BEAUTY IN THE BREAKDOWN: 8 p.m., $12. The Teragram Ballroom, 1234 W. Seventh St.

BOBBY McCRIN: With Taylor McFerrin, 8 p.m., $30-$105. Valley Performing Arts Center, 18111 Norcoff St., Northridge.

Celtic Nights: 8 p.m., $40-$80. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 13700 Center Court Drive.

CHRISTINE EBERSOLE: 7 p.m., $75-$135. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills.


DC DOG: 8 p.m., $30. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

EL JIDAE DESCHA: With Barbarito Torres, 8 p.m., TBA. Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale.


JENNY LEWIS & THE WATSON TWINS: With M. Ward, 7 p.m., $39.50. Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 3300 Wilshire Blvd. See Music Pick.

KID KOALA: 8 p.m., $19-$49. UCLLA Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, Westwood. See GoLA.

MAJICAL CLOUDZ: 8 p.m., $20. Hollywood Forever Cemetery, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles.


Robby: With Ryland, 6 p.m., $25-$35. Fox Theater Pomona, 1735 Vine St., Los Angeles.


SATURDAY, JAN. 30

THE BLASTERS: With The Sun Demons, Big Sandy, Denny Dean, The Honeydrip. 8 p.m., TBA. The Yost Theater, 307 N. Sycip St., Santa Ana.

BUYEPONGO: With Cut Chemist, Jeremy Sole, Dexter Story, Changu Majadero, 8:30 p.m., $15. El Rey Theatre, 5515 Wilshire Blvd. See Music Pick.

DSS: 8 p.m., $20-$52. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim.

EXCISION: With DJ Figure, Bear Grillz, 9 p.m., $25-$50. Hollywood Palladium, 6215 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles.

JENNY LEWIS & THE WATSON TWINS: With M. Ward, 7 p.m., $39.50. Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 3300 Wilshire Blvd. See Music Pick.

KITTEN: With Hunny, Oliver the Kid, 9 p.m., $19.50. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 Hollywood Blvd.
GO NIGHT ON BROADWAY: With Aloe Blacc, Ozomartti, Bullet & Snowfox, The Spazzmatics, The Cold & Lovely; 5 p.m., free, on Broadway, between Third & Fourth Sts., Los Angeles. With Phat Cat Swing, Burgundy Bells, Lost Angels, Diamondsback Annie, Miss Tosh, 5 p.m., free; at Million Dollar Theatre, 307 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With Lucent Dossier Experience, Scott Hove, plus a short film festival, 5:30 p.m.; free; at Los Angeles Theatre, 615 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With Zen Arts, The No Vacancy Orchestra, TBA, 5:30 p.m., free; at Orpheum Theatre, 842 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With music from Claude Bessong, plus Patrick McPherson’s science-fiction-fantasy invasion, 5:30 p.m.; free; at Palace Theatre, 630 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With Rebel Bingo, 5:30 p.m., free; at Globe Theatre, 740 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With James Fauntleroy, Calentura, Thee Commons, Slow Hollows and others from Clouds Below, plus Patrick McPherson’s No Vacancy Orchestra, 5:30 p.m., free; at Orpheum Theatre, 3801 Mission Inn Ave., Riverside. With Annie, Miss Tosh, 5 p.m., free; at Million Dollar Theatre, 2200 Via Rosa, Palos Verdes Peninsula.

THURSDAY, FEB. 4

STEEL PULSE: 8 p.m., $28. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

TUESDAY, FEB. 2

MALIBU COMET: 7 p.m., $25-$27.50, The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles. With Bleached, Palberta, Drowned Gold, 9 p.m., $27.50. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 3

JAY Z: 8 p.m., $30. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

THURSDAY, FEB. 4

BAIO: 8 p.m., $20. El Rey Theatre, 5515 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles.


CANDIDE: David Schweizer directs and Kristo Van Grypierre conducts Long Beach Opera’s presentation of Leonard Bernstein’s opera, which features Todd Strange in the title role and versatile soprano Jamie Chamberlin as Cunegonde, Sat., Jan. 30, 2:30 & 8 p.m., $29-$513, Center Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra.

BREAK THE BOUND: A dance party to benefit the L.A. Women’s March, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., free, at Milford Arms, 3115 Milford Ave., Los Angeles.

FRIDAY, FEB. 5

40TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT: A concert celebrating the 40th anniversary of the recording of Buffalo Springfield’s self-titled album, 8 p.m., $22-$25. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

NEW YEAR’S EVE: A New Year’s Eve party, 9 p.m., $25-$50. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

SATURDAY, FEB. 6

GODFREY & THE BLACK EMPEROR: With Xylouris White, 8 p.m., $35, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 3300 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.

JANUARY 29 - FEBRUARY 4, 2016 // la weekly // 49

Sundays, 307 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. With Reggie Watts, Rachel Bloom, Baked, Mac Sabbath, The Blue Truth, 6 p.m.; free; at The Tower Theatre, 802 Broadway. See GoLA.

RIVER ROCKS SATURDAY NIGHT: The weekly Saturday night party, 10 p.m., $5-$10. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

MARCH OF THE MELTDOWN: A benefit for the Meltdown Film Festival, 11 p.m., $5-$10. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

DRUMCIDE: The weekly drum circle, 10 p.m., $5-$10. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

L.A. CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: Bassoonist Kenneth Munday is accompanied by LACO oboists Claire Braeau and Allan Vogel and harpsichordist Patricia Mabe for selections by Beethoven, Hummel, Balfe and others, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., $35-$65. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL: The week’s premier venue, with LA Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, Los Angeles Master Chorale and others, see listings.

TODAY

SUNDAY, JAN. 31

CHINESE NEW YEAR: 8 p.m., TBA, Saban Theatre, 8440 W. Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills.

LOOS: With Ballet Folklorico Mexicano, 7:30 p.m., $35-$65. Valley Performing Arts Center, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge. See Music Pick.

TAMIR HENDELMAN: 7 p.m., free, St. Francis Episcopal Church, 2200 Via Rosa, Palos Verdes Peninsula.


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JANUARY 29 - FEBRUARY 4, 2016 // la weekly // 49

SMARTS: A performance and discussion, 8 p.m., $22-$32. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 N. Hillsborough Dr., Los Angeles.

REGULO MARTINEZ-ANTON: A presentation of the Spanish Cuatro, 8 p.m., $30. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

RODEN CARRINGTON: 8 p.m., $40-$45. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim.

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SAVE THE DATE
January 29 - February 4, 2016
www.laweekly.com
The filing of this statement IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE 9716 El Arco Drive Fein Image, Fine Image 605 656 836 17th Street Recording is a Sublime, Mary J Blige, DAW Pro Tools HD4, one ISO vocal booth & Studio professional state of the art equipment. We guarantee satisfaction. Studio A has a Master of the art Pro Tools skills. Mix Room B has two master Pro Tools skills. Snare $250,000. Loss of confidence & damages; Pain, Suffering, & Loss of earning power. Please take notice that a copy of this petition was previously served as indicated therein above and there to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Jennifer R. Gonzalez, previously of 909 Oakover Ave., is desirous to change her name from: Maria Santos Bispo to Marí Saint Scheib. It is ordered that all persons interested in the said matter interested in the said matter be granted. Court Date: 2/18/16. Dated: January 8th, 2016. Please take notice that a copy of this petition was previously served as indicated therein above and there to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Jennifer R. Gonzalez, previously of 909 Oakover Ave., is desirous to change her name from: Maria Santos Bispo to Marí Saint Scheib. It is ordered that all persons interested in the said matter be granted. Court Date: 2/18/16. Dated: January 8th, 2016.
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